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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT BY THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR POPULATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE

at the

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Introduction

The ultimate goal of Population and Development is to accord an improved quality of life to the people of the world. Not only to count people but to ensure that people count in Development; that both their material and non-material security must be the first priority of Development. The Independent Commission has held Public Hearings across all the major

regions of the globe to ask the people their views on quality of life, and this has been the message that they have strongly conveyed to us.

And here I quote exactly words spelt out in our South Asia Public Hearing: "Let the direction and pace be the people's choice. Let them be empowered, by a sharp increase in their access to education, communication, health care and technology".

In face of this we must ask: Can we go on with more of the same?

The answer from this conference is no. By seeing Population-and-Development as one interrelated process, the Cairo Conference addresses the most important transition of all: the transition from an economy that ignores and marginalises millions of human beings, to an economy which takes as its prime role the achievement of a better quality of life for people. Integrated Population Policies

This has profound and concrete implications for population policies.

The time is over for the old type of policies.

The time is over for what a group of medical doctors in South Asia called the "chain of coercion";

The time is over for the imposition of numerical targets on people;

For the employment of technologies about which people, and specially women, are not informed;

The time is over for governments to exercise coercion on their fellow

citizens; For international agencies to ignore the frontiers both of sovereignty and of culture and human dignity.. Instead, the time has come to institute innovative public policies which address Population and Development questions. These policies must meet the following criteria: People to whom population programs are addressed should be seen as the essential decision-makers of the choices they have to make, and should never be seen as clients or recipients;

In each society, population policies must take into account many factors, cultural elements, history, and the ways in which people relate to one another, to the world, and to nature. Most of all, they have to be guided by the basic values present in each society; Specific public policies, such as health and education - and above all education of women are decisive on the population trends. They should never be reversed by short term economic programs - it is not defense budget that should remain untouched, but health and education budgets;

As population policies are central to political decision-making, they must be the responsibility of the State; as they are part and parcel of an integrated approach to the fabrics of society they must always be defined and implemented with the active participation of the civil society; The intervention of external agencies in population policies is only acceptable when these initiatives are integrated and subordinated to population policies, as defined nationally or locally.

Specific Strategies Against Poverty

Indeed, not "more of the same". In the relationship between Population and Development, extreme poverty appears as the number one problem. The

Bucharest Conference, aware of the link between poverty and fertility, forced "Development" to take the main responsibility for the stabilization of population. At that time, there was a widespread assumption that poverty could be absorbed by the processes of development.

Twenty years later, it is common knowledge that, in countries with a high percentage of poor in their population, conventional development strategies cannot absorb poverty.

Today, 1 in every 4 persons on this planet lives in destitution. If, in today's economy, we are unable to accommodate the poor, what can we do during the next 30 years, at the end of which time we will have 3 billion more? If in this generation, we are not able to cope with poverty and to invent new forms of management of wealth and resources, in 30 years one in two of the world's people will be poor.

Let me add yet another statistic. Today, one in 5 people in the world fall into the narrow age group of 15 to 24 years. These young people require our most urgent attention. Not only are they facing terrible levels of unemployment, not only do they constitute much of the world's floating population, but they are also the parents of the future.

If we fail them, we create the largest generation of impoverished people in our history, people who must raise, in poverty, the children of the future. Here is thus a focal point for our attacks on poverty.

The consequences of this for population policies are radical. No conventional "population PROGRAMME" can work effectively under such conditions of sub-human destitution. Nor can people be the object of

massive "population programs". In fact, under these circumstances this sort of PROGRAMME would become almost irrelevant. Mass population programs are thus no answer to such misery.]

Specific strategies against poverty are not only a necessity in an ethical sense, but are also a must politically. Hunger, limited access to drinking water, to sanitation and health services, and the deterioration of hygiene and of housing, constitute the lot for a growing proportion of people living in most of the regions of the world, notably in the mega-cities. It is not just the fact of appalling misery and deprivation for fellow humans which we recognize here, but the continuing threat to the economic and political evolution of those societies.

Many of the specific strategies against poverty have already been spelled out and some of their elements have been tried in various places: the political and institutional recognition of the role of the informal sector, land redistribution, or credit for small-scale enterprises. What we need now is the imagination to elaborate further those strategies; we need the political commitment to make them effective, we need the elimination of bureaucratic restraints to allow such initiatives to work. Let us be clear about these strategies. They must be decided and implemented as an urgent, economically viable and humanly caring response to extreme poverty.

Collective Survival

It is today acknowledged that damage to the environment and the threat to human life on this planet through the depletion of the resources and

the accumulation of wastes, is the result of the joint effect of growth in population and consumption.

Therefore, we are far from the sustainable development so many speakers referred to. To change the patterns of consumption and production is a condition for a sustainable development. It is a condition for collective survival. Moreover, it is unacceptable to act against population growth alone, without acting at the same time, against the growth of consumption.

We are not speaking here only of moral questions addressed to the consciences of individuals to restrict their consumption, and to change their life-styles. What we refer to is a change in the very patterns of consumption, in the way in which supply and demand are constituted in contemporary society. What is being suggested here is a need for a "reversal of the logic" of our economic system.

The whole equation of production and consumption, inherited from the industrial revolution and transposed to unpredicted levels of material performance by the revolution in information technology, needs to be re-examined.

Economics needs to be re-directed in its goals, and diversified in its modes of operation. . Either economics deals with woman human beings as the central concern or else there is no solution, at the world level, for the combined challenges of between Population, Development, and Environment.

We are now convinced that a major political initiative to face this global challenge has to take place among the community of nations and

the emerging global civil society. A new intellectual framework, new institutional arrangements, new practical tools, new types of leadership are needed to give shape to a more humane future.

No State alone, no multilateral organization alone, can come to grips with these huge problems. All live forces, in each society and on the international scene, must be mobilized. At the international level, civic society must take up the responsibility.

The Nobel Prize Rigoberta Menchu said at our Latin-American Public Hearing:

"Our people are anxious whether there is indeed a future". "Nuestra gente es ansiosa de futuro".

May the community of nations help to build such future.

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