



## **94-09-08: Statement of Population Institute, Mr. Werner Fornos**

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The electronic preparation of this document has been done by the  
 Population Information Network(POPIN) of the United Nations Population  
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AS WRITTEN

REMARKS BY

WERNER FORNOS

PRESIDENT OF THE POPULATION INSTITUTE.

During these still early hours of the 1994 International  
 Conference on Population and Development, many of us sense that we are  
 participating in more than the third decennial United Nations conference  
 on population.

It is our sense and our vision that the final Cairo document  
 will become a milestone in the annals of humankind.

This very meeting may be the last best chance for the nations  
 of the world to shape the principles and the strategies that will result  
 in an equitable balance between the world's population, its environment  
 and resources.

My own expectation is that we will focus sharply on the issue of  
 universal access to family planning. I firmly believe we can develop a

definitive strategy to achieve such access within the next five to 10 years.

Slowing down the rapid growth of human population must be the first and foremost item on our agenda.

Consider that we live today in a world of some 5.7 billion people that last year increased by 93 million --- the equivalent of adding to our planet the populations of the United Kingdom, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway.

But only five million of these people were added to the industrialized world, where there might have been some hope that they could be reasonably accommodated.

Some 88 million people, however, were added to the world's very poorest countries -- those where mere survival is too often a day-to-day struggle.

It is in these countries where each year reproductive related complications claim the lives of up to one million women --- the equivalent of a World War II Holocaust every six years.

It is high time for an iron-clad global commitment to the proposition that every woman who wants to control her own fertility has both the right and the means to do so.

It is high time for the world to ensure universal access to voluntary family planning.

Within this context, we must always reject coercion and we must keep in mind that there are two sides to the coercion coin.

We must neither condone nor tolerate coercion as a strategy for reducing population growth.

At the same time, we must never condone nor tolerate coercive pregnancies that women are subjected to when they are denied access to the methods and the means to control their own fertility.

There are two special matters that this conference must deliberate in a courageous and forthright manner.

First, there is the issue of male responsibility. There is virtual worldwide acceptance of an apparent axiom that both the burden of fertility regulation and the burden of rearing children rest solely with women.

Male attitudes must change if there is to be gender equality and a meaningful improvement in the quality of life for the next generation, and generations yet unborn.

Governments can assist in this endeavor by instituting information, education and communication programs that emphasize the importance of male participation, both in the planning of the family and in family life thereafter.

Though serious concern has been directed toward the breakdown of the family unit, we believe the basic family unit can not only survive but actually thrive, as it never has before.

But only if the status of women can be substantially raised. And only if men throughout the world can be convinced that assuming responsibilities in family planning and in family life enhances rather than threatens their masculinity.

Secondly, it is essential that there be a modification of unsustainable consumption practices.

Developing countries are implored to reduce their population growth to avoid an erosion in development gains.

But these same developing countries have every right to question the wasteful consumption habits of industrialized countries -- patterns that contribute to draining resources available to the developing as well as the industrialized world.

There can be neither prevention of environmental degradation nor the realization of sustainable development until there is considerable progress in reducing population growth and in reversing current consumption and production patterns.

Finally, each and every one of us must resolve that the 1994 ICPD Program of Action will have a life beyond Cairo. The stakes are too high for this document to remain mere words on paper.

I implore each of you here today to extend your very best effort toward transforming the words we write in Cairo into deeds: viable programs in the cities, towns and villages across the length and breadth of this planet.

We simply cannot afford the luxury of waiting for someone else to follow through on what we have begun.

If the next billion people join us on this planet in 10 years, measurable improvements through development will not be achieved.

Time lost in the struggle to stabilize world population before it doubles again can never be recovered.

We must address the goals of development and slowing population growth simultaneously.

It is by our ability to convert the Cairo Program of Action from rhetoric into reality that the work of this conference will be ultimately judged.

The reward for our success in this endeavor will be a better quality of life for people everywhere. The penalty for failure is unthinkable.

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