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The Regional Population Conference
in the Arab World
25-29 March 1984
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AMMAN DECLARATION
ON
POPULATION IN THE ARAB WORLD
ISSUED BY

THE REGIONAL POPULATION CONFERENCE IN THE ARAB WORLD

Amman Declaration on Population in the Arab World

Introduction

Like the countries of the Third World, the Arab countries were subjected to exploitation and suffered from various manifestations of backwardness as a result of foreign domination, since attaining independence, the countries of the Arab World have diligently attempted to remedy the adverse effects of the colonial era on their socio-economic structure and to bring about a cultural revival with a view to meeting the basic requirements of socio-economic development, enabling the Arab people to take part in shaping the present and future destiny of their countries, and contributing to the endeavour made by the international community in its quest for peace, progress and prosperity.

In its efforts to achieve this goal, the Arab World is experiencing socio-economic changes and facing challenges and danger which make it necessary to mobilize the endeavours, capabilities and potential of society and to satisfy the basic needs of the population.

In this context, the population question constitutes a primary factor the dimensions of which are determined by those challenges and dangers. During the last three decades, the Arab region has undergone tremendous demographic changes manifested in various forms including remarkable population growth. The population of the Arab World increased from about 132 million in 1974 to about 180 million in 1984 and this figure is expected to rise to over 250 million by the end of the century.

As a result of this rapid and continuous increase in the population, it was imperative to formulate appropriate plans and policies to meet their basic human needs in regard to employment opportunities, education, health, food and public utilities. The region has also witnessed a huge wave of manpower migration among its various countries and also to countries outside the region. Consequently, the population question is closely linked to the economic and social aspects of development issues and requirements in their global context.

With a view to approaching the population question within the framework of interrelated national development implications, the Arab governments welcomed the convening of the World Population Conference due to be held in Mexico in the summer of this year and, in preparation therefore, sent delegations to the Regional Population Conference in the Arab World at Amman in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 25 to 29 March 1984.

On the basis of the principles, objectives and guidelines formulated at the Regional Population Conference in the Arab World in connexion with the population question, the delegations of the participating Arab States hereby issue the following declaration:

I. Preamble

The Regional Population Conference in the Arab World

Recalling the provisions of the Charter of Arab Economic Action promulgated at the Eleventh Arab Summit Conference, held at Amman in 1980, by the Arab Kings and Heads of States who expressed therein their conviction that the Arab people were both the instrument and the objective of development.

Committed to the Charter of the League of Arab States and the statutes of its specialized organizations and councils, as well as by the principles, objectives and policies set forth in Arab conventions and sectoral strategies.

Mindful of the Charter of the United Nations and the mandates of its specialized agencies and regional commissions aimed at promoting humanitarian causes, guaranteeing human freedoms and needs, and fulfilling the basic requirements and conditions for a better life for mankind as a whole,

Affirming the Arab responsibility for the achievement of over-all Arab development, collective self-reliance, the enhancement of productivity and the satisfaction of the social, material and spiritual needs of the Arab People,

Aware of the effects of international economic relations on over-all development in the Arab countries, of the importance of population size in freeing these relations from dependence, and of the consequent emphatic need for socio-economic integration in the Arab World.

Recognizing the magnitude of the challenges and dangers facing the Arab nation as a result of fragmentation, dependence, and the ruthless colonial attacks, expansion ambitions and forced migrations in which the Zionist entity is engaged.

Confident of the ability of the Arab people to overcome those challenges and dangers once the appropriate requirements are fulfilled for their active and effective participation in development endeavours,

Emphasizing that efforts to fulfil those requirements necessitate a comprehensive review of development strategies and past achievements and, in particular, an appraisal of the human development endeavours and population situations and policies in the countries of the Arab World,

Considering that, in spite of the efforts made, the achievements of the past decade with regard to population policies and human development in the Arab World have fallen short of the aspirations expressed in the objectives established by the World Population Plan of Action adopted at Bucharest in 1974,

Convinced that the many new circumstances and changes observed in the countries of the Arab World during the last ten years make it necessary to consider the formulation of an Arab plan of action for population policies in the coming decade,

Conscious of the fact that, notwithstanding the disparities between population policy priorities in the countries of the Arab World, there is an imperative need for the formulation of a clearly

defined Arab population policy to ensure the optimum utilization and distribution of human resources within the context of a comprehensive and integrated development strategy,

Taking into account the principles and objectives of the World Population Plan of Action adopted at Bucharest in 1974, and the achievements made in the Arab World

Establishes general principles for population policies;
Defines future objectives for action in the light thereof;
Submits recommendations conducive to the achievement of those objectives and to the fulfilment of their requirement as regards programmes, projects and means.

General Principles

1. The improvement of human condition is the starting point for development endeavours aimed at the achievement of a high standard of social well-being in the Arab World.
2. Since the family is the basic nuclear unit of society, all appropriate measures should be taken to preserve its integrity, to protect its values and cohesion, to ensure the proper upbringing of its children and to provide its members with opportunities for a decent life.
3. An integrated approach to the population question requires consideration of its various dimensions such as size, growth rates, geographic distribution and population characteristics. This approach must take full cognisance of the fact that those four

population dimensions are interdependent and, consequently, should not be treated separately as isolated aspects in any population policy since they are all influenced by the processes of reproduction, mortality and internal and external migration.

4. The population question is closely interrelated to socio-economic issues, the cultural milieu and development endeavours. Population variables are determined in response to a broader social environment. The prevailing socio-economic and cultural circumstances condition the manner in which individuals view the principal demographic processes and, consequently determine population dimensions. Population variables in turn influence the social environment at the country, national and global levels.

5. As a result of the diversity of demographic features and the varying relationship between population and the socio-economic situation in the Arab World, the population problem is regarded in a different light in each Arab country. This accounts for the variety of population policies in the countries of the Arab World at the present stage, although it is hoped to reconcile these policies within the framework of a comprehensive Arab concept of population policy.

6. In view of the differing circumstances in the Arab countries, emphasis should not be placed on family planning programmes as the sole means to reduce population growth throughout the Arab World, nor should such programmes be regarded as the corner-stone for the formulation of a population policy to be implemented in conjunction with policies required for socio-economic development.

7. Arab countries which adopt a policy of reducing population growth rated as a means to alleviate constraints on development may formulate socio-economic policies designed to reduce reproduction rates, by, inter alia, encouraging family planning. However, the optimum degree of success achievable by family planning programmes in the reduction of reproduction rates will be determined by the relevant socio-economic circumstances which condition the reproductive behaviour of couples. The creation of circumstances favourable to the reduction of birth rates to the levels desired in some Arab countries will remain subject to the progress of development efforts in enhanced forms and at higher levels than those currently prevailing and in a manner that transcends their mere linear extension in future.

8. The practice of birth control by couples is a human right guaranteed by international covenants. Family planning also has a clearly beneficial effect on the health of the mother and family life. The Arab countries should endeavour to safeguard this right by providing facilities for the dissemination of knowledge and effective means for the practice of family planning on the basis of free choice. However, the extent to which this right may be exercised will remain dependent, as in the case of other human rights, on the type of the desired development and the extent of accomplishments achieved in the countries of the Arab World.

9. The acute population problems in the countries of the Arab World may be mitigated or completely eliminated if they are tackled from a pan-Arab standpoint through the

formulation of an Arab population policy based on current circumstances and aimed at solving the population problems of individual countries within a general development in a pan-Arab context. Such a policy would constitute a pan-Arab framework for the population policies of individual Arab countries.

10. Comprehensive Arab development depends on the attainment of appropriate levels of economic growth and social progress, including: a steady and sustained increase in production and productive capabilities through optimum utilization of material and human resources, in a manner consistent with country and pan-Arab objectives, with a view to the achievement of equitable distribution, the provision of employment opportunities and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the Arab people.

11. The effective tackling of current population problems in the Arab World through sustained development requires an effort to achieve liberation from dependence on the industrialized countries and from the burden of exploitation to which the region is subjected by international monopolistic forces. Consequently, the Arab World needs to adopt a strategy of collective self-reliance and to co-operate closely with the countries of the Third World in order to resist the proclivity towards dependence on transnational corporations and international financial cartels.

12. The industrialized countries should adopt policies aimed at the achievement of better formulas for improving

the equilibrium between the size of the population and the resources of this planet by reducing their enormous expenditure on armaments and curtailing their excessive and wasteful consumption of the resources of the entire world. Such measures would be of greater efficacy with regard to the conservation of resources, the preservation of the environment and the achievement of a higher standard of well-being for all of mankind than a call for the reduction of population growth in the Third World.

III. Objectives

13. The formulation of an integrated Arab population policy to serve as a framework for country population policies, and the establishment of measures for its implementation in order to:

(a) Counteract the methods used by the Zionist entity to force Arab to emigrate from the occupied territories;

(b) Regulate the movement of manpower among the Arab countries in such a way as to increase the development benefit for both the Arab country of origin and the Arab host country and to give priority to Arab labor in the Arab labor-receiving countries;

(c) Achieve a better long-term distribution of population among the Arab countries in order to maximize development potential in the Arab World through the integration of human and natural resources in a manner conducive to the achievement of Arab security.

14. The formulation and implementation of integrated population policies in the countries of the Arab World within the context of development and of the Arab population policy with a view to:

(a) The achievement of appropriate population growth rates; which implies birth rates consistent with the desired growth rates, in conjunction with the maximum possible reduction of mortality rates, particularly with regard to infants and children;

(b) The achievement of a geographic distribution of population in keeping with development requirements through the curtailment of urban growth, particularly in the poverty belts surrounding cities, the reduction of migration from rural and small urban areas to the major urban agglomerations, and the development of human settlements establishment in uninhabited areas, and in new residential localities possessing economic production centres and social service institutions;

(c) The regulation of migration for permanent settlement in the countries of the Arab World in a manner consistent with the Arab population policy.

15. The assignment of special priority to the improvement of population characteristics within the general framework of population policy and development imperatives, and the adoption of measures to ensure the enjoyment by the population of the basic level of food security, particularly as regards strategic food supplies, to achieve a better distribution of incomes and to provide the commodities and public services needed to improve the standard of living of productive and underprivileged population.

IV. Recommendations

In the light of the principles contained in this Declaration, and with a view to the achievement of the objectives set forth therein, the Arab Governments are invited to act in accordance with the following guidelines:

Development strategies and population policies

16. Adoption of the principle of comprehensive planning based on a clear conception of population policy and of the manner in which socio-economic conditions and cultural factors might affect the course of a given population system and in which the said system might affect the structure of those conditions.

17. Planning designed to meet the basic needs in respect of employment education, health, food, housing clothing and social security by the year 2000 and the pursuit, in each of these sectors, of a demographic course of action conducive to the achievement of the objectives of an integrated population policy and the provision of an appropriate minimum level of family income.

18. Fulfilment of the basic requirements needed to enable the Arab people to manifest their productivity and creativity by ensuring opportunities for popular participation in development endeavours, promoting individual and public freedoms and the inter-linking of rights and obligations.

19. The creation of conditions and possibilities conducive to the advancement of women and the promotion of their

effective participation in development endeavours by,
inter alia :

- (a) Increasing the contribution of women with regard to work in societal activities at all administrative levels and in all technical fields in order to promote equality between men and women while, at the same time, securing the conditions and services needed to enhance this contribution;
- (b) Further the economic potential of women by according them special consideration with regard to education training, eradication of illiteracy and employment opportunities in the formal and non-formal sectors of the economy;
- (c) Encouraging participation by women in all aspects of public life, including their participation at decision-making and executive levels.

20 . Adoption of the principle of efficiency manifested in maximizing production , and the principle of social justice when formulating and implementing development plans in such a way as to improve productivity and give priority to the distribution of the benefits of development among all social categories, ensuring a greater share thereof for the less privileged groups.

21. Assignment of priority to integrated development including the improvement of methods of production, the improvement of basic services, stabilization of the rural population in their areas of residence, equitable distribution of national income, the linking of industrialization strategies to agricultural development and the adoption of

appropriate forms of manpower utilization in application of the principle of full employment of the labor force.

22. Rational utilization of natural resources and allocation of their proceeds to the development process with a view to ensuring appropriate standards of living for future generations and safeguarding their rights to the benefits accruing from those resources.

23. Taking measures to develop the national technological capabilities and to adopt a rational approach to the transference of technology with a view to its adaptation to the needs of Development in the Arab World.

24. Adoption of measures to regulate the movement of manpower and capital among the countries of the Arab World in such a way as to increase the benefits resulting from Arab development endeavours.

25. Promotion of co-operation with countries of the Third World and continuation of the dialogue the industrialized countries in all fields of development, including the population field in its broad sense, with a view to the establishment of a new international division of labor and an equitable international economic order.

The Components of population policy

(a) reproduction

26. Creation of a favourable socio-economic environment for the achievement of birth rates consistent with the desired population growth rates through development endeavours and the pursuit of general policies designed to guide the reproductive behaviour of couples.

27. The formulation, by Arab Governments wishing to reduce fertility rates, of population guidelines for their development plans with a view to encouraging couples to have a small number of children by expanding education, enhancing the status of women, increasing the participation of women in organized economic activity, reducing infant mortality rates, providing social security and making family planning services accessible to couples wishing to avail themselves thereof.

(b) Mortality

28. Provision of health services for all citizens in keeping with the principle of health for all by the year 2000, with emphasis on preventive as well as curative health services, supply of suitable food and portable water, and creation of favourable environment for healthy human development, with a view to ensuring that citizens enjoy a longer life expectancy at birth.

29. The granting of special priority to the provision of primary health care services in remote areas and for poorer social groups deprived thereof.

30. Provision of food and health care for pregnant women, and encouraging mothers to adopt the method of natural breast feeding due to its beneficial effect on the health of both mother and child.

31. Dissemination of education and health awareness among the various groups of the population, particularly

in rural areas and poorer urban districts, as an important contribution towards primary health care, using all educational and information facilities to that end.

32. Devotion of a special effort to the eradication of contagious and endemic diseases and to the promotion of theoretical and applied research in this connection.

(c) Internal migration and geographic distribution

33. Diffusion of production locations in areas far removed from present centres of human agglomeration, within a framework of regional provincial planning, and with a view in the long run to a better distribution of the population throughout the geographic territory of the Arab countries.

34. Furtherance of integrated rural development with a view to achieving population stability.

35. Improvement of the production and human settlement potential of small and medium-size urban centres in order to endow them with the socio-economic vitality needed to retain and expand their population.

36. Establishment of new, carefully planned centres of human settlement with a view to integrating productive and social activities and setting up new projects in currently unpopulated areas in order to reduce population density.

(d) External migration

37. Seeking measures to safeguard the rights and welfare of Arab migrant workers in the industrialized countries, especially the second generation of such workers, and to facilitate the integration of returning workers in their home countries or in the other parts of the Arab World.

38. Submission of claims for appropriate compensation from the industrialized countries in respect of the migration of skilled Arab manpower to work in those countries, and arresting this brain-drain by providing such manpower with genuine opportunities for integration and participation in development in the Arab World.

39. Creation of conditions under which Arab migrant workers would be given preference over their foreign counterparts with regard to employment in the Arab countries and would be integrated into the socio-economic activity of those countries, thereby increasing their contribution to development in the host countries.

Data, research, the exchange of information and training

40. Collection, classification analysis and dissemination of the statistical data needed for the planning and evaluation of population policies and programmes at specified periodic intervals.

41. Consolidation and strengthening of public census and civil registration systems, organization of sample surveys,

and conduct of in-depth studies which are beyond the capabilities of the traditional sources of population data.

42. Compilation of statistics on migration and their dissemination among the Arab countries in order to facilitate human exchanges.

43. Standardization of statistical terminology in the arabic language and of the timing of census operations and endeavours to introduce uniform statistical classifications.

44. Strengthening the role of the Arab Employment Agency in its endeavours to establish a network for the supply of information on Arab labor markets to help in the study of the factors of supply and demand with a view to facilitating and regulating manpower movements in the Arab region.

45. Ensuring the availability of all the technical resources and skills needed for the analysis of demographic data and the conduct of statistical surveys.

46. Intensification of efforts to train specialists at all levels in the collection and analysis of demographic data, and strengthening the role of Arab institutions and organizations in this respect.

47. Promotion of research work in the social sciences linking demography of other fields of scientific knowledge in order to ensure a better understanding of the function of the population factor within the totality of the socio-economic context and to derive the optimum benefit therefrom for the formu-

lation of population policies within the framework of development plans.

48. Encouragement of scientific institutions specialized in population studies to disseminate their research and survey work through the issue of special publications and periodic bulletins and the provision of the necessary facilities for the exchange of such research and survey work.

49. Promotion of the exchange of expertise and visits among persons responsible for research, training and programmes related to population activities in the Arab countries.

50. Inclusion of population education in the curricula of schools, teacher-training institutions and programmes for the eradication of illiteracy and utilization of the information media to disseminate the requisite population knowledge in order to increase levels of awareness by making use of the results of research and studies.

51. Emphasis should be placed on the role of the Arab funds in financing country and regional projects relating to population studies and activities within the framework of development plans and joint Arab action, and in supporting institutions engaged in research and training in statistics and population planning.

52. An Arab labor compensatory fund should be established in the manpower-exporting countries for the purpose of

promoting Arab co-operation in the use of resources and as a first step towards the establishment of a similar international fund. Its functions would include payment of the cost of manpower substitution, study of the social consequences and effects of migration on migrants and their families and the proposal of methods to facilitate their reintegration on their return to their home countries. The Arab Countries should be urged to submit a proposal concerning the establishment of the international Fund to the World Population Conference at Mexico.

53. Arab regional organizations should be requested to collect data and publish statistics and surveys appraising the demographic situation in the sectors falling within their fields of technical specialization in order to help in the formulation of policies, the selection of regional projects, the dissemination of knowledge of population statistics and the provision of the information needed by research workers.

International co-operation

54. It is hoped that international co-operation, within the framework of the United Nations, will continue to provide technical and financial assistance for population activities which further the development endeavours of Member States, and that such co-operation will also continue to promote the exchange of expertises and information among developing countries.

55. Support should be given to the important role played by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities in

order to enable it to effectively discharge its task of providing assistance in the broad field of population policies, programmes and projects. In the light of the needs resulting from the manifold nature of the dimensions, development requirements and causes of the population question, there is an imperative need to expand the functions and responsibilities of UNFPA to enable it to meet the increasing number of requests from Governments and organizations for assistance in their population policies and programmes and in improving the level of awareness and understanding of population issues in their development context. Accordingly, the United Nations is called upon to take appropriate measures and early follow-up action to this end. States Members of the United Nations are invited to contribute financially to UNFPA in a manner commensurate with the increasing needs of population projects.

56. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities is called upon:

(a) To co-operate further with the Economic Commission for Western Asia and the Secretariat of the League of Arab States in support of their ongoing endeavours to implement regional programmes and projects in the field of population activities;

(b) To expand and develop programmes of technical co-operation with the Arab countries especially with the least developed among them, in order to help them

to tackle their population problems, control the causes of those problems and implement their programmes and projects in this respect.

57. Countries providing Israel with support and assistance are called upon to halt such assistance forthwith in view of its highly detrimental effects on the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories since it is enabling the Israeli authorities to expropriate further Arab lands, establish israeli settlement thereon and exert constant pressure on the Arab population with the intention of rendering their lives more difficult, of reducing their employment opportunities and forcing them to emigrate, thereby altering the demographic character of the occupied Arab territories, including the city of Jerusalem.

58. The industrialized countries are urged to reduce their enormous expenditure on armaments and to reach early agreement on issues relating to disarmament. They are also urged to avert the spread of international conflicts to the Arab region and to provide increased aid to meet the requirements of development and population programmes in the developing countries.