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REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL POPULATION CONFERENCE
MEXICO, 6-13 AUGUST 1984

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1. By its resolution 1981/87 of November 1981, the Economic and Social Council convened an International Conference on Population for 1984. That major meeting was preceded by thorough preparations comprising four meetings of groups of experts, five regional conferences, one session of the Population Commission and two meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. The Second African Population Conference, which was held in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania, in January 1984, adopted the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action for African Population and Self-Reliant Development.
2. The aim of this note is to inform member States about what has happened since the last meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers in conformity with resolution 506 (XIX) which endorsed the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action.
3. The Programme of Action was put before the nineteenth session of the Commission and tenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers, held in Addis Ababa in 1984. It was the document of reference for the African group during the work of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and during the discussions of the Conference itself.
4. It should be noted that the Mexico Conference was a follow-up to the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974 which adopted a World Population Plan of Action. The Mexico Conference had to appraise progress in implementing the Plan and make recommendations for the further action.
5. Because of its universal nature, the Bucharest Plan of Action is difficult to implement since conditions in the various regions of the world vary considerably. Although Europe and North America have very low birth and mortality rates and fertility below the level required for population replacement, Africa and a considerable portion of Asia have alarming rates of population growth. Moreover, migration and urbanization represent different problems in each of the regions.
6. In 1980, African countries adopted the Lagos Plan of Action based on a strategy of autonomous and self-sustaining development. The Plan has influenced the directions and ideas of African Governments in all areas of economic and social development, including population. As a result of efforts by Governments in the area of data collection and manpower training, population questions and their interrelationships with economic and social development problems are now better understood; much, however, still remains to be done in this area.
7. In view of that fact, the 44 African delegations that met in Arusha as part of the preparations for the Mexico Conference adopted the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action.
8. The Programme reflects the diversity of conditions in African countries in that the 93 recommendations are addressed both to countries whose populations are growing at an alarming rate and countries which, because of their peculiar situation, desire a higher rate of fertility. Since the rate of mortality, especially infant mortality, is still too high in almost all African countries, recommendations were made on how to bring morbidity and mortality rates down to a more acceptable level.

9. The longest discussions were on fertility and family planning problems. In that respect, the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action stresses the need to protect the family, promote family welfare, improve the health of mothers and children, educate the population, make appropriate family planning services available to couples and individuals and, especially, integrate family planning in maternal and child health care services.
10. With respect to migration and urbanization, the Arusha Conference recommended a comprehensive policy of creating medium-sized towns, preventing the rural exodus in general and the flow of young people from the rural areas to urban centres in particular, and promoting the revival of rural economies. The Conference also emphasized the need for measures to solve the problems of migrants and refugees.
11. As far as the role of women in the development process and the problems of youth are concerned, recommendations were adopted on allowing women to play a more crucial role, preparing young people for a working life and improving protection for children.
12. Other recommendations were made to regional and subregional organizations, particularly ECA, UNFPA, Governments and donor agencies, on data collection and analysis, training and research, information, the participation of communities and the role of private and non-governmental organizations.
13. Thus the Kilimanjaro Programme covers all population-related questions and problems. It enabled the African group, assisted by the OAU and ECA secretariats, to make a considerable contribution to the discussions of the Mexico Conference.
14. On behalf of the African group the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania presented the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action to the International Conference on Population. After stressing the importance that needed to be accorded to the status and role of women, the problems of migration, the promotion of know-how, training and demographic research, he said that the United Nations Secretary-General would be working out how to monitor and follow up the implementation of the World Plan of Action.
15. The International Conference on Population reaffirmed the validity of the principles and objectives of the World Plan of Action. Although the economic and social situation of developing countries has improved somewhat since 1974 it is nevertheless true that in some cases per capita income has stagnated or even decreased. Therefore efforts to pursue the objectives of the Plan and recommendations of the Mexico Conference have to be redoubled.
16. The first 76 recommendations emanating from the Mexico Conference cover all areas relating to population matters, namely:
 - (a) Socio-economic development and population;
 - (b) The role and status of women;
 - (c) Formulation of population policies;
 - (d) Population objectives and policies;
 - (e) Improvement of population, knowledge and policy.

On the whole, these recommendations have the same objectives as those of the Kilimanjaro Programme.

17. The last 12 recommendations concern the role of Governments, international co-operation and the follow-up, review and assessment of the Plan.
18. The crucial role of Governments in implementing the principles of the Plan is stressed. Experience has demonstrated the variety of policy approaches that can be effective when designed and implemented by Governments with due regard for the particular political, social, cultural, religious and economic conditions of their countries. However, many factors including the lack of definite commitment, inadequate resources, ineffective co-ordination and implementation and insufficient data, have limited the effectiveness of Governments in the implementation of their national population policies. The recommendations of the Mexico Conference emphasize specific means whereby Governments can overcome such shortcomings.
19. To that end, Governments should strengthen their administrative and managerial capability, involve communities more actively in the planning and implementation of population programmes and intensify technical co-operation among developing countries and encourage subregional, regional and interregional co-operation.
20. Since the Bucharest Conference, international co-operation activities have achieved a number of notable successes in attaining the Plan's objectives. Requests for assistance from developing countries have increased considerably. However, although the resources available have more than doubled in nominal terms, that increase has not been sufficient either to keep pace with demand or to compensate for erosion due to inflation. The developing countries themselves allocate increasing shares of development expenditure for population programmes. Therefore greater support should be given to programmes where effective use of resources has been demonstrated and to initiate new activities.
21. The United Nations Secretary-General should continue to undertake the monitoring of population trends and policies and review and appraisal of the World Plan of Action. He should also monitor the multilateral population programmes of the United Nations system through appropriate arrangements. In that respect, the next thorough review and appraisal of progress made towards the implementation of the Plan will be undertaken in 1989.
22. The recommendations of the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action and the report of the International Conference on Population held in Mexico are the outcome of prolonged debates and mature consideration. It is now up to member States themselves to ensure the application of these recommendations in the light of their right to national sovereignty, their options and strategies. In that respect, ECA has a crucial role to play in providing technical assistance.