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Meeting of Ministers
7-8 April 1993
Amman

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS

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I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The Meeting of Senior Officials and Experts was held at Amman, Jordan, from 4 to 6 April 1993. It was organized jointly by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the League of Arab States. The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan kindly hosted the Meeting.

A. Objectives

2. The Meeting was held to discuss and appraise population trends and policies in the region, and to formulate the draft Second Amman Declaration on Population and Development in the Arab World, for submission to the Meeting of Ministers to be held at Amman from 7 to 8 April 1993.

B. Participation

3. The Meeting was attended by the following Arab States: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

4. The Meeting was also attended by observers from the following non-Arab States: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Greece, Holy See, Italy, Japan, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

5. Representatives from the following United Nations organizations and bodies attended the Meeting: Department of Economic and Social Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

6. The Meeting was attended by representatives of the following specialized agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank.

7. Two observers from the following two intergovernmental organizations attended the Meeting: the European Community and IMO.

8. The Meeting was attended by observers from the following Arab governmental organizations: the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in GCC States, and the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU).

9. The Meeting was attended by the following non-governmental organizations: Alberto Vollmer Foundation, Inc., Association of Health and Environmental Development (Egypt), Arab Council for Childhood and Development, Arab Demographers Association, Awal Women's Society (Bahrain), Arab Women Centre for Training and Research, Arab Women Organization of Jordan, Arab Thought Forum (Jordan), Ford Foundation, Association of Palestinian Family Planning

and Protection, Business and Professional Women's Club (Jordan), the Environment Protection Council, Family Planning Association (Egypt), Family Planning Association (Sudan), Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, General Federation of Iraqi Women, General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for the Arab Countries, General Federation of Jordanian Women, General Federation of Syrian Women, Hawa Society, Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Islamic Relief Agency (Jordan), International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection, Almanar Consultants, National Women Union of Tunisia, NGO Planning Committee for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, Path Finder International, Population Action International, Secours Populaire Libanais, Third World Association of Economists, Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, Noor Al-Hussein Foundation and Queen Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund.

10. The following official and private institutions participated in the Meeting: Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics, Arab Planning Institute, Cairo Demographic Centre, Centre for Economic, Legal and Social Studies and Documentation, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Muyen Orient Contemporain (CERMOC) (Jordan), Economic Research Centre (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Blida University (Algeria), Department of Statistics (Jordan), Al Kutba Publishers (Jordan) Municipality of Greater Amman, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources, Royal Scientific Society (Jordan), the Population Council, the Population Institute, the Population Reference Bureau, Inc., Union of Arab Banks, Sana'a University, University of Jordan, and Yarmouk University (Jordan).

C. Opening of the Meeting of Senior Officials and Experts

11. Mr. Mahdi Mustafa Al-Hadi, representative of the League of Arab States, opened the Meeting of Senior Officials and Experts. Welcoming the participants, he expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting the Meeting.

12. Referring to population conditions in the occupied Arab territories, he emphasized that continued Jewish immigration was further aggravating the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian Arab people. He saluted the children of the intifadah and wished them success and victory. Mr. Al-Hadi also commended the discussion papers prepared for the Meeting, which was the fruit of cooperation between UNFPA, ESCWA and the League of Arab States.

13. Welcoming the participants on behalf of ESCWA, Ms. Thoraya Obaid said that formulating Arab population policies was not an easy task, not to mention implementing, evaluating and updating them. Arab population conditions varied from one group of countries to another as regards population growth rates and population density.

14. The region was particularly affected by emigration indicated by high rates of forced migration resulting from displacement of the Palestinian people. In the Arab world emigration was characterized by high rates of labour migration. She added that population conditions in the Arab world were characterized by low standards of female education and a low level of participation by women in economic activities outside the informal sector.

15. Mr. Jyoti Singh (UNFPA Representative and Executive Coordinator of the World Population Conference and Development) said that the Meeting was being held in response to a resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council, in preparation for the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in 1994. He stressed the relationship between population growth and development as well as the need to promote family planning programmes and to integrate them in population policies and programmes, with emphasis on programmes aimed at lowering child mortality and closing the gap between rural and urban areas. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of the role of women.

D. Election of Officers

16. Mr. Munther Masri (Jordan) was elected Chairman of the Meeting. Ms. Tamanni Safir (Algeria), Mr. Mohammad Abdel Salam Al-Banna (Egypt), Mr. Salim Al-Tauqi (Oman) and Mr. Ibrahim Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) were elected Vice-Chairpersons.

17. Mr. Ibrahim Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur.

18. The drafting committee consisted of Mr. Mustafa Al Ilwani (Qatar), Mr. Walid Mustafa (Palestine), Ms. Nabila Hamza (Tunisia), Ms. Somaya Saad (Egypt), Mr. Sidi Mohammed Ould Sidina (Mauritania), Mr. Mukbil Ayed Hamad (Iraq), Mr. Hussein Al-Khatib (Jordan), Mr. Tayeb Raouf (Morocco), Mr. Moorad Adjabi (Algeria), Mr. Jamal Al-Ghunaim (Kuwait), Mr. Tawfic Ossairan (Lebanon), Mr. Mo'ayad Abul-Chamat (Syrian Arab Republic) and Mr. Yahya Yahya Al-Babily (Yemen Arab Republic).

E. Agenda

19. The Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening statements
2. Election of Officers and adoption of the agenda
3. Population structure and growth in the Arab world
4. Population policies and programmes in the Arab world
5. Population, environment and development in the Arab world
6. Population distribution and internal migration in the Arab world
7. International migration in the Arab world
8. Women and development in the Arab world
9. Family planning, health and family well-being in the Arab world
10. Second Amman Declaration on Population and Development in the Arab World
11. Adoption of the final report and the recommendations

II. TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING

A. Population structure and growth in the Arab world

20. The Meeting had before it a paper entitled "Population structure and growth in the Arab world: recent trends" (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/3), which focused on the increasing rate of population growth since the beginning of the century. It pointed out that the most populous Arab countries were to be found in the African continent, with Egypt ranking first. The paper also referred to the youthful population structure in the region.

21. The study considered the infant mortality rate as a key development indicator; it is currently 68 per 1,000 in the Arab world. Female mortality was higher than male mortality for those between 2 months and 3 or 4 years.

22. The overall fertility rate in the Arab countries had declined considerably during the period studied. However, the situation in that regard was not considered throughout the Arab world. Comparing Egypt with Morocco in terms of demographic changes, the paper pointed out that the main reasons for the lower fertility in Morocco might be the higher rate of female participation in economic activities and Magharibi emigration to Europe.

23. The commentary on the paper pointed out that fertility and mortality had decreased significantly in most of the Arab States during the past 15 years. It was asked whether lower infant mortality had been accompanied by an improvement in child survival. It was stated that childhood diseases, especially diarrhoea and respiratory complaints, were still widespread in the Arab countries. Another question was whether economic conditions tended to lower fertility rates. In reply, it was pointed out that reproductive health was poor in spite of the low fertility. An objection was raised against the interpretation of comparison between Egypt and Morocco, since there were some major differences between the two countries, particularly in terms of family structure and the role and status of women.

24. During the discussion, several delegations raised questions concerning the sources' timing, comprehensiveness and the recency of the data and figures contained in the study. Certain delegations expressed reservations concerning the statistics relating to their countries. The basis on which the study dealt with such figures and data was questioned. Due to lack of adequate evidence, one delegate questioned the validity of considering "international migration" as a major reason for the lower fertility rate in Morocco.

25. Reference was made to the struggle over land and population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to the effect of policies pursued by the Israeli occupation authorities on population growth in the occupied territories, in keeping with the Zionist strategy of depopulating the land. The occupation authorities had not undertaken a full population census since 1967, and the statistics issued by them were unrealistic.

26. It was stated that the papers submitted at the Meeting constituted a framework for discussion. Accordingly, emphasis should be placed on the

formulation of recommendations for the International Conference on Population and Development, rather than on statistical errors. The distinction between rates and problems of population growth was stressed, as well as the need to pay due regard to the relationship between population growth and development.

27. Mention was made of the inadequate funding for conducting surveys to produce realistic statistics.

B. Population policies and programmes in the Arab world

28. The Meeting had before it a study (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/4) on population policies and programmes in the Arab world directly or indirectly related to population issues. The population policies outlined in the study had been extracted from official documents submitted by member States and from their responses to periodic United Nations questionnaires.

29. In the Arab region population policies varied according to economic situation and due to differences in the population density of inhabited areas and the importance of international migration as a factor in the execution of ambitious development plans in certain States. These policies also differed according to the demographic status of each State and the stage of demographic transition it had reached. The main issues in population policies could be summarized as follows: (1) the population growth rates, about which the States of the region had different views; (2) the demographic or health risks associated with high fertility levels and the need to support family planning programmes; (3) the need to continue to reduce mortality rates, especially infant and child mortality and the mortality of women in their reproductive years; (4) balancing the distribution of the population and dealing with problems of high urbanization; (5) defining the status of international migration and its various implications for labour-sending and -receiving States; (6) the low characteristics of the population especially in the non-oil-exporting States; and (7) the environmental effects of recent developments in the region, which were aggravated by the scarcity of water resources.

30. As far as the position of the States of the region regarding the elements of population policies was concerned, it was observed that only five Arab States (Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Yemen) had explicit population policies with specified targets and implementation mechanisms. Regarding other aspects, the following observations were made:

(a) Population growth: Most of the States in the region stressed the interlinkage between rapid population growth and socio-economic development and the high dependency ratios resulting from the age structure and high fertility levels;

(b) Fertility and family planning: The policies in this area paralleled the policies of the Arab States on population growth. The States that had explicit population policies aimed at lower fertility rates and wider use of contraceptives through voluntary government programmes with specific quantitative targets;

(c) Mortality and morbidity: All countries of the region considered the improvement of health conditions and the reduction of mortality as a primary objective, since they were supportive of achieving "Health for All by the Year 2000". Generally speaking, health variables were viewed in the context of health strategies which could also constitute part of the development plans. The majority of Arab States had set quantitative targets which corresponded to the goals of "Health for All" and to the recommendations of the Mexico Conference; however they stressed two aspects, namely immunization and the reduction of infant mortality;

(d) Geographical distribution: All the countries of the region mentioned the existence of imbalances in population distribution and a high level of internal migration to urban areas, which had prompted most of these States to establish development plans and specific strategies and programmes in order to modify population distribution;

(e) International migration: The States of the region attached great importance to this type of migration because of its contradictory implications for labour-sending as well as labour-receiving States, that is States affected by movements in both directions. However, the different points of view had not in general been applied to population policies, and no quantitative targets had been set.

31. The study emphasized the need to give due regard to the integration of population in view of variables in development plans since it was possible now to achieve this goal, in view of the availability of data and the existence of an appropriate scientific methodology, and especially the existence of an adequate institutional framework.

32. In the commentary, it was observed that the shape of population policies varied from a document setting forth the main principles of the policy (such as relying on positive incentives, free choice and respect for traditions) on the one hand, to one containing an integrated strategy for family planning, maternal and child health care, information, women and development, on the other. The general framework for family planning activities in these States took into consideration health, human rights and development. In some of these States, the application of birth spacing was fundamental.

33. Although the populations of the Arab world shared common features such as rapid population growth and a young age structure, major geographical areas such as the States of the Arabian peninsula, the Mashreq, the Nile Valley and the Maghreb had specific features. Thus it was difficult to perceive the formulation of a general population policy for all the States of the region since the specific policy of each geographical area took into consideration priorities specific to particular regional features.

34. On the other hand, it was agreed that population issues and demographic factors should be viewed as interrelated with social and economic development programmes and plans, taking into account the impact of population variables on development and the impact of development on population variables.

35. The study dealt with the issue of labour migration in the Arab world, referring only to the fact that the labour-sending States were increasingly

dependent on the remittances of their nationals while the labour-receiving States depended on the supply of the necessary labour force. It did not examine the future of these trends or the policies needed to resolve the difficulties facing the movement of migrant labour from the Maghreb to Europe. Neither did it examine the competition of Eastern European labour, or the competition of Asian labour with Arab labour in the Gulf.

36. During the discussion the majority of the speakers stressed the need to link population policies with development in its economic and social dimensions, taking into consideration political and cultural aspects.

37. Some mistakes were noted with regard to one of the States. It was indicated that an official document had been sent to ESCWA correcting those mistakes.

38. A call was made to concentrate on changing the focus of population policies in order to avoid limiting it to fertility and birth control, and to adopt a wider concept that took maternal and child health conditions into consideration and to examine other aspects, especially international and internal migration. Arab and international funding institutions should be invited to allocate adequate resources for conducting surveys and studies on such migration.

39. The delegates emphasized the role of non-governmental organizations and local institutions in formulating and implementing population policies, as well as the need to enhance the crucial role of women in population policies from the standpoint of their participation in development and the decision-making process.

C. Population, environment and development in the Arab world

40. The Meeting had before it a document entitled "Population, environment and development in the Arab world" (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/5). Many United Nations conferences held during the past two decades had dealt with the relationship between population, environment and development. The World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974 had clearly shown the existence of a close interrelationship between population and socio-economic development. During the past two decades it had been emphasized that the relationship between population, natural resources, development and environment was a complex dynamic relationship which varied from State to State and from place to place, and which evolved positively or negatively over time.

41. It was also clear that the problem was not just one of population increase but also of high population growth and mismanagement of development and resources, which further widened the gap between rich and poor on the one hand, and exacerbated unemployment problems and restricted investment in development, on the other. What remained clear was that the faster the rates of development and progress, the lower the rates of population growth.

42. Furthermore, the unsatisfactory population distribution led to a higher population density in some environmentally sensitive areas, limiting their absorptive capacity and contributing to their rapid deterioration. The

imbalance between investment in the development of remote and rural areas and investment in urban areas led to high rates of migration from rural areas to the cities. This resulted in the deterioration of the rural areas and, at the same time, the mushrooming of shanty towns on the outskirts of cities, leading to a worsening of the social, economic and environmental conditions.

43. The paper showed the extent of these problems in the Arab world and the misuse of the limited natural resources such as farm land and ground- and surface water. The major focus for development was on the need for current economic development practices to preserve environmental and natural resources, allowing the same standard of living, if not a better one, for future generations.

44. In order to achieve development, it was necessary to emphasize the relationship between population policies and development policies, the use of natural resources and the protection of the environment. The paper presented a number of recommendations at the regional and pan-Arab levels and stressed the need to give due attention to education and training--especially for women--and effective grass-roots participation in policy formulation and implementation. It also argued that population policies should concentrate on targets covering more than just controlling population size, since it was necessary to promote public awareness concerning family planning as an essential factor in improving the quality of life. The paper recommended setting up effective regional cooperation, especially in the field of the exchange of information and studies, and the establishment of regional and subregional models to examine the relationship between population, resources, development and environment.

45. In the commentary, it was suggested that a better way to address the subject would be to examine first the situation world-wide and then the situation of the Arab States, and to discuss certain regional features. Reference was made to the rapid pace of technological progress in the world. It was asked whether, and for how long, technological progress reliant on natural and especially non-renewable resources could keep pace with the population increase in the Arab world.

46. The study referred to the fact that arable lands represented only 4 per cent of the total area of the Arab world, because of the scarcity of rainfall. It was felt that this factor needed to be taken into consideration when making recommendations. Attention was also drawn to the need for the Arab States to formulate common population policies. The necessity of establishing an Arab model for population and resources which took into consideration the specific character of Arab society was emphasized. It was observed that the relationship between population, resources, development and environment depended essentially on one factor: man. Reference was also made to the effect of this relationship and the prevailing social ideas on the pace of population increase.

47. During the discussion reference was made to the impact of the Israeli occupation on the environment, development, destruction of infrastructure, control of water resources and land confiscation. An observation was made regarding: the imbalance between population and resources; Israel's seizure of water resources and the insufficiency of what was left for the Palestinian

people; and the effect of certain industrial wastes on the environment. It was suggested to formulate recommendations concerning the dumping of environment-polluting substances from the industrialized countries in the developing countries and concerning the relocation in developing countries of industries that were environmentally hazardous.

48. It was observed that the study disregarded the subject of population education, and a recommendation was made to include population topics in the curricula at the university and at lower levels of education in the Arab world.

49. Stating that national resources were not sufficient to meet growing human needs, notwithstanding the existence of balanced environmental and population-related policies, was considered a pessimistic and incorrect view. Population increase could be an advantage and not necessarily a problem once a balance was achieved between such increase and a sound development policy, which meant increasing resources through modern technologies. Population policy was not an alternative to development policy, but an integral part of it. The Arab States should exchange expertise and concentrate on research to define the relationship between population policies and development policies.

D. Population distribution and internal migration in the Arab world

50. The Meeting had before it a document entitled "Population distribution and internal migration in the Arab world" (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/13). According to the study, between 1950 and 1990 the total urban population in the Arab countries increased by 95,784,000. Of that total, 55,687,000, i.e., about 58 per cent, resulted from natural increase while the remainder was due to net migration, both rural-urban and international. Of the 40,097,000 people who had moved into urban areas in the Arab countries, 38,544,000, or 40 per cent, came from rural areas, and the balance from the net international population exchange.

51. The Arab countries could be divided into two main categories. Category A included those countries in which the greatest proportion of urban growth between 1950 and 1990 had resulted from natural increase. Category B comprised countries where urban growth was attributable to the high rates of rural-urban migration.

52. In the commentary, it was said that the paper was characterized by a wealth of scientific material, modern analytical criteria, and a theoretical framework for migration determinants, using overall empirical analysis, which helped to illustrate the real situation with regard to urbanization and internal migration in the Arab States.

53. In the course of the discussion, the following comments and proposals were made in connection with the study:

(a) Regarding levels of urbanization in the Arab world as compared to other regions, account should be taken of the varying definitions of the term "urban" used in different countries; standardization of such definitions was required to permit intercountry comparisons;

(b) The study did not explain the remarkably large changes in the level of urbanization in certain countries, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates;

(c) The study explained migration determinants by using macro-analysis. As the phenomenon of migration was an individual mode of behaviour, however, it might be better to study such behaviour using the individual as the unit of analysis;

(d) The study did not review the population distribution policies of the various countries or the extent to which such policies had achieved their objectives;

(e) The study did not address the difference in population densities among the Arab countries and within individual countries--the main aspect of poor population distribution;

(f) The study also failed to address the question of the limited area of agricultural land in some Arab countries as compared to others.

54. The commentary stressed the importance of defining the concept of urbanization as well as standardizing statistical and population definitions and terminology, in order to allow for meaningful comparisons between Arab countries.

55. Objections were made in the course of the debate to the figures relating to certain countries, on grounds of unreliability, obsolescence and inaccuracy of sources. It was noted that the paper relied on projections that were often erroneous, especially in regard to migration, which changed very rapidly. Some of the figures were unrealistic. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the information contained in the paper was derived from out-of-date sources, in spite of the availability of recent studies.

56. One delegation saw a need for the formulation of a charter or a plan of action, to be agreed upon between the wealthy labour-receiving Arab countries and the rest of the Arab countries, in the field of population policies and the rights and obligations of workers.

57. A call was made to concentrate on population distribution and its relationship to development plans in the Arab countries. It was added that resistance to displacement and internal migration was not addressed in such a manner as to make it possible to reach solutions to the problems of poverty.

E. International migration in the Arab Maghreb and Arab labour migration

58. The Meeting had before it documents entitled "International migration in the Arab Maghreb" (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/7) and "Arab labour migration" (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/8). The first paper stated that in the wake of the Second World War most Western European countries, particularly France, pursued policies aimed at attracting immigrants to help in their economic reconstruction efforts in view of the shortage of European labour. Even after closing its borders to immigration, Europe continued to receive various flows

of immigrants. Maghreb migrants were estimated at 3 million, 80 per cent of whom resided in Europe and the rest in other regions. The nature of this migration had changed from economic to demographic as the number of migrants increased, while the economically active proportion of the population declined and the brain drain intensified.

59. In the context of the European economic crisis and growing unemployment, immigrants had become the targets of harassment and calls for return migration. Consequently, unemployment began to spread among Maghreb immigrants. External migration in the Maghreb had been characterized by a host of positive and negative repercussions.

60. On the positive side, the financial remittances had a favourable effect on the families of migrants and on investment in agriculture and small-scale businesses. On the negative side, however, imbalances existed between regions. Intensive demographic pressures in vulnerable regions led to high levels of migration; wealthy regions benefited from migrants' remittances and investments, some sectors even came to depend on migrants' remittances.

61. In this vital field, it was essential that an appropriate Maghreb strategy be developed within a broad Arab framework in order to control the factors that aggravated demographic pressures and enable the Maghreb national heritage, particularly in rural areas, to help to reduce rural out-migration which, in turn, influenced external migration.

62. The second paper, dealing with Arab labour migration, indicated that efforts made in various studies were still highly inadequate in relation to the labour movements between sending and receiving countries.

63. According to the paper, the proportion of Asians in the six Gulf countries had increased to almost two thirds. This was explained by disparity in wages paid to Asian and Arab workers. In the case of Egypt, migration had been selective during the late 1970s and early 1980s, but subsequently ceased to be so. There was an evident discrepancy between conference announcements and actual actions in this field.

64. The paper concluded that there was a need to establish institutions to facilitate Arab labour movement to the receiving countries and recommended that emphasis be placed on the human factor, allowing immigrants to become naturalized or granting long-term residence permits to skilled labour. The paper also suggested that a deterioration in relations between countries should not deprive workers of their rights or result in their deportation. The study called for increased contributions by the funds supporting migration.

65. In the commentary on the two papers, it was stated that, with regard to the identity or integration crisis among Maghreb immigrants, racial discrimination was one of the main factors hindering normal coexistence between immigrants and receiving societies in Europe. The institutions and government agencies concerned in Europe could play an important role in minimizing the problems faced by the Maghreb community by adopting appropriate policies. The concerned institutions in the Arab labour-sending countries could also make a positive contribution in that regard.

66. Concerning migration to oil-rich Arab countries, the reasons for giving priority to Arab labour were not sentimental or traditional, but rather of a practical political and cultural nature, i.e. self-defence and enhancement of their status within the present and future international system.

67. In the discussions, speakers said that it was only natural that the Asian labour force should increase in view of its lower wages, since companies and institutions were interested in profitability. Another reason was the proximity of Asian countries to the Gulf States. Objections were raised to the statement that there was a divide between nationals and immigrants, as extremely friendly relations prevailed between these groups. It was suggested that the question of naturalization not be raised, since that was a matter for the receiving countries to decide upon.

68. The Arab countries were called upon to give serious consideration to defending migrants' rights, to concluding a Euro-Arab convention protecting their rights and catering for the welfare of the families of migrants left behind in their home countries, so that they would not be adversely affected.

69. In the discussion on international migration in the Maghreb, it was argued that the French occupation of Algeria had been colonization-oriented and a major cause of internal migration and European immigration. The French occupation had disrupted social and family structures. The overwhelming majority of migrants to European countries were not integrated properly in their new countries of residence, contrary to what the paper contended.

70. One delegation expressed reservations concerning certain points in the paper on Maghreb migration.

F. Women and development in the Arab world

71. The Meeting had before it a study (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/9) on women and development in the Arab world that addressed the participation of women in development; it aimed at shedding light on some important aspects of that participation with a view to placing greater emphasis on and redressing prevalent inequalities between men and women in various fields. The study dealt with the role of women in public, political and economic life. It also discussed the demographic, social and health context of women's lives. Participation of women in political life and decision-making were considered the main indicators of the status of women in society. The gap between men and women in that field remained enormous, and Arab women were still playing a marginal role in political and public life. The study based its findings on data published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1991. It stated that women were deprived of the right to vote in seven Arab countries and that the percentage of women elected to national parliaments was very small, both in absolute terms and in comparison with men. During the period from 1987 to 1988, women had held high-level government posts in only seven countries, mainly in the ministries of social affairs. According to United Nations statistics concerning the geographical distribution of posts, 26 out of 164 posts were occupied by women in the entire Arab region, as at 30 June 1992. This showed the extent to which women were deprived of participation in the decision-making process.

72. Statistics showed that significant progress had been achieved over the last two decades towards better integration and greater participation of women in the labour market. In all the countries of the region, the economically active female section of the population had been steadily growing since 1970. It had tripled in the Maghreb region and in the Arab countries of Africa and had quadrupled in the Middle Eastern region. However, that progress was a long way from having resolved the inequalities and imbalances in working conditions between men and women. The study noted that official statistics, due to problematic definitions and measurement methods, generally tended to obscure the real participation of women in economic life. That was certainly the case in agriculture, where the problem of under-estimation of women's work was at its worst. The industrial sector employed only a marginal proportion of the female working population. It was the services sector that accounted for the highest proportion of women; that could be attributed to the dominance of men in the industrial sector and to the fact that jobs such as nursing, social services, clerical and domestic work were considered the traditional domain of women, not to mention the lower level of education for women in comparison with men. University education was a powerful factor in allowing women access to the prestigious field of scientific, technical and liberal professions. The proportion of women in those professions was relatively high, particularly in teaching, scientific research and medicine. However, university education was not sufficient to give women access to higher administrative posts.

73. Compared to her situation 20 years ago, Arab woman today lived in better demographic, social and health conditions. That was due to the development of the socio-economic infrastructure, particularly in education, health and housing.

74. In the commentary, it was stated that the study did not adequately deal with the participation of women in political life, perhaps because United Nations statistics in that field were not comprehensive. The commentator called for the adoption of a strategy combining the following elements: (a) establishment of a precise and detailed database on women to assist in the formulation of appropriate policies; (b) providing decision makers with precise information; (c) establishment of specialized entities for training decision makers in the formulation of policies for integrating women into development; and (d) supporting private organizations and volunteer work and formulating educational programmes. Reference was also made to the implications of social adjustment policies for the status and health of women.

75. In the discussion, some participants inquired about the sources of data and statistics mentioned in the study, and some said that the participation of women in political life in their countries was better than the study claimed. The establishment of a precise and detailed database on women was recommended, as well as finding means to support public organizations for the promotion of the role of women. It was noted that the study omitted mention of the participation of women in resisting the occupation in Lebanon and Palestine. It was also mentioned that one Arab country had achieved important progress in the participation of women except in the political field, and that the principle of participation of women was enshrined in the Islamic Shari'a. A suggestion was made concerning the amendment of civil status laws and the enactment of legislation that would give a woman married to a foreigner the right to transfer her nationality to her children.

76. One country was committed to development and recognized the importance of the role of women, since no nation could reach its full potential unless women participated fully in all aspects of public life. A call was made for the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and for devising a strategy to make the changes needed to remove all obstacles to the full integration of women in development as decision makers, planners, technical consultants, managers and extension-workers in the field of environment as well as other fields. A call was also made to all Arab countries that had not yet done so to sign, ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

G. Family planning, health and well-being in the Arab world

77. The Meeting reviewed a study (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/SAPC/10) that sought to identify the main features of the region's demographic and health patterns and their underlying processes. The presentation drew upon the results of surveys conducted over the past five years in 14 Arab States. Amongst the most salient results from these surveys were the significant decline in mortality rates, the drop in fertility levels, internal migration from rural to urban areas and international migration to the Gulf countries. However, the net increase in the size of the Arab world's population was expected to continue to rise. Statistics pointed, moreover, to significant reductions in infant and under-five child mortality since the early 1970s. The drop in child mortality was directly related to reproductive factors, namely the age of the mother at the time of childbirth, the birth sequence and the spacing of births, factors considered to be among the most important reasons for the decrease in infant and child mortality. The prevalence of disease and malnutrition were continuing at a high level in the Arab region, although levels differed from one country to another. The results showed that the use of anti-dehydration salts was on the increase in most countries, although antibiotics continued to occupy a major role in the treatment of diarrhoea. The vast majority of women breast-fed their babies for long periods. However, a new trend was emerging among educated mothers to shorten the breast-feeding period, a trend that could have adverse effects on the health of the child.

78. The study dealt with fertility levels in the Arab countries. It showed the evident disparity among them and indicated a decline in reproductive health, particularly with regard to monitoring pregnancies and deliveries. The study described the main fertility and family planning policy trends in the Arab world and stated that development was an overall objective. It also made it clear that any family health care policy must provide for reducing early nuptiality, promoting breast-feeding, increasing birth spacing to three years at least, and avoiding pregnancies after the age of 35 or 40 at most. All countries of the world were now agreed on the objective of achieving "Health for All by the Year 2000", a target that constituted a challenge for all Governments and bodies concerned with health and development services. Linking population planning to economic and social development programmes was today entirely dependent on political decisions.

79. The commentator raised questions about the effects of delayed age at marriage on fertility. With regard to maternal care, it was stated that prenatal care was not provided because it was not felt to be necessary. More research in that area was needed. With regard to family planning, the four

risks "too close, too many, too old or too young" were interrelated. When all the variables were taken together, the spacing of births was seen to have the greatest impact. Concerning child and infant mortality at an early age, importance should be attached to family planning programmes focused on birth spacing. Regarding the question of child nutrition, it was wondered whether special criteria could be adopted for the Arab region. It was also wondered whether there was a nationwide population growth problem in the Arab world. It was suggested that there was no population size or growth problem, although there was a geographical and resource distribution problem. Integration was possible between countries with material resources and those with human resources. However, failure to achieve such integration obliged each individual country to deal with its population problems in its own way.

80. During the discussion, it was mentioned that the study overlooked the psychological aspect of children born at short intervals from one another, and it was recommended that attention be given to the psychological, mental and health aspects of children. It was urged that family planning services be made part of basic health services and that all obstacles impeding access to means of family planning aids be removed. There was also a need to involve non-governmental organizations in family planning activities and to introduce reproductive health concepts in school curricula. The discussion covered the effects of war and the economic embargo on maternal and child health programmes in Iraq. It was stressed that in order for any family planning policy to succeed it was imperative that consideration be given to the participation of the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the dissemination of family planning aids. It was felt that the study overlooked the political and economic motives that contributed to the rise or decline in fertility in a given society. It was proposed that the Conference stress the importance of maintaining a balance between economic and social considerations in economic adjustment policies in view of their impact on population issues. Reference was also made to the impact of social and cultural considerations on reproductive behaviour.

81. The participants unanimously agreed on the need to update the data included in the various studies presented at the Meeting and to take into consideration the various statements made during the discussion of each study by Arab State representatives, prior to their publication in the proceedings of the Conference.

III. DRAFT SECOND AMMAN DECLARATION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB WORLD

82. The Drafting Committee prepared a draft of the Second Amman Declaration on Population and Development. The Meeting approved the draft Declaration for submission to the Meeting of Ministers to be held at Amman from 7 to 8 April 1993, which would consider and adopt it as a document to be presented as a regional Arab document at the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo from 5 to 17 September 1994.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

83. The Meeting of Senior Officials and Experts adopted this report at its closing meeting on 6 April 1993.

