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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION, 1984

DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mr. Ewald BROUWERS (Netherlands)

Addendum

CHAPTER II. GENERAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE

1. At its third meeting, on 24 January 1984, the Committee considered agenda item 3, entitled "General preparations for the Conference: general preparatory activities". The Committee had before it the following documents:

- (a) Progress report of the Secretary-General on general preparations for the International Conference on Population, 1984 (E/CONF.76/PC/2);
- (b) Progress report of the Secretary-General on substantive preparations for the International Conference on Population, 1984 (E/CONF.76/PC/5);
- (c) Report of the Secretary-General on recommendations of the Expert Group on Fertility and Family (E/CONF.76/PC/6);
- (d) Report of the Secretary-General on recommendations of the Expert Group on Population Distribution, Migration and Development (E/CONF.76/PC/7);
- (e) Report of the Secretary-General on recommendations of the Expert Group on Population, Resources, Environment and Development (E/CONF.76/PC/8);
- (f) Report of the Secretary-General on recommendations of the Expert Group on Mortality and Health Policy (E/CONF.76/PC/9).

2. In his opening statement to the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population, the Secretary-General of the Conference reviewed the general preparations undertaken so far for the Conference.
3. He informed the Committee that organizational arrangements for the Conference were being finalized in co-operation with the Government of Mexico. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Mexico for acting as host to the Conference during the period of considerable financial constraint.
4. Concerning participation in the Conference, he particularly emphasized the need for broad representation of those concerned with population. He was also pleased to inform the Committee that more than 30 countries had established national committees in preparation for the Conference and that all the regional commissions were undertaking preparatory activities.
5. Discussing the financial arrangements for the Conference, he announced that, based on payments and pledges made by 22 Governments and assurances of pledges from three other Governments, the target of \$1.5 million for extrabudgetary funding would be met. Further, the General Assembly had decided to allocate \$800,000 from the regular budget for the Conference.
6. He recalled that the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat was responsible for the substantive aspects of preparations for the Conference and that the Conference secretariat had been working closely with all concerned units of the United Nations system and with non-governmental organizations. He announced plans to intensify public information activities.
7. He described the two main documents before the Committee: the "Review and appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action" (E/CONF.76/PC/10) and "Recommendations for the further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action" (E/CONF.76/PC/11).
8. He concluded his statement by observing that since the World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974, 1/ a large number of Governments, particularly in developing countries, had become actively involved in population policies and programmes. A much more varied and sophisticated body of knowledge had been established. He felt that the course of future action to be set at the Mexico Conference should take into account that body of knowledge and should carefully assess the impact of new population problems and perspectives in the context of overall development plans and programmes. It was his hope that the Preparatory Committee would provide clear and specific guidance to participating Governments for making their decisions at the Mexico Conference.
9. The Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference stated that the panorama in the field of population was a mixture of reasonable hopes and disenchantment. The third world continued to live in fear for tomorrow's food, energy and employment. Although the reduction of world population growth rate from 2.0 per cent to 1.7 per cent per year during the last decade had been a reason for satisfaction, it masked a variety of regional and national situations which were not entirely

satisfactory. In the third world, apart from China where the policy of birth control had been extremely successful, fertility had declined only moderately and, owing to a corresponding decline in mortality, population growth had remained virtually unchanged.

10. However, he emphasized that the slow progress of fertility decline in most of the third world should not be taken to imply that population policies were ineffective. The decline of fertility that had occurred had indeed been remarkable in the context of the current economic crisis; action in that area required strong will, tenacity and more resources than had been available.

11. Among other reasons for optimism, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference mentioned the changes of attitudes that had been observed among the populations and among Governments. In four fifths of all countries, Governments considered that the demographic factor was of primordial importance for their development strategies. The last decade could stand out in the history of approaches to development as the period when Governments became almost universally aware of the urgency of concerted action in the field of population, beyond the antagonism that often influenced the debate in the past.

12. During the past 10 years, there had also been a considerable broadening of the perception of population problems by Governments. Population policies had ceased to be exclusively concerned with fertility. On the one hand, more attention had been paid to mortality and migration; on the other hand, it had appeared increasingly indispensable to treat demographic variables in the context of resources (especially food), environment and development in general.

13. The United Nations philosophy of integrated development and the numerous conferences that had been held on global issues contributed to the broadening of the concept of population in the political sphere and to diversified action in that field. The Bucharest Conference, had stimulated that progress; the Mexico Conference would have to pursue this path because much remained to be done.

14. In considering the preparatory activities for the Conference, the Committee was informed of the results of several regional meetings by delegations of the host countries concerned. It was reported that an intergovernmental meeting held at Sofia, from 6 to 12 October 1983, was organized by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) with the financial assistance of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), in which most ECE member countries participated. One of the concerns expressed at the meeting was that the demographic problems of developed countries deserved international attention. At the same time the meeting noted the urgency of population problems in many developing countries and the importance of international co-operation and assistance. It was also reported that among the major themes which emerged from the meeting were: declining population growth and its consequences for the aging of the population; fertility trends and the effect of unemployment on fertility; far-reaching changes in family structure; slowdown in mortality decline in certain countries, as well as mortality differentials; changing patterns of urbanization and international migration flows. The report of the meeting was to be reviewed by the ECE at its thirty-ninth session to be held in April 1984.

15. It was reported that a meeting of the Committee of High-Level Experts on Population of the Latin American region was held at Havana, from 17 to 19 November 1983, and recommendations from that meeting would be submitted to the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) meeting in Lima in March 1984 for its consideration. It was requested that particular attention should be given in the preparatory activities for the Conference to the findings of the Havana meeting, reference to which had been involuntarily omitted from the relevant document.

16. The attention of the Preparatory Committee was drawn to the Second African Population Conference held at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in January 1984, which was organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with financial assistance from UNFPA. It was reported that there was broad agreement among African delegations on a number of important issues, among which the following were noted: the social and economic welfare of families and individuals, including their health and family planning needs; the need for equilibrium between population and economic growth; the central importance of integrating population into development planning; the need for a scientific approach to population issues which had implications for training of personnel; data collection and analysis, as well as equipment for service delivery. The Kilimanjaro Plan of Action on Population which emerged from that meeting called for political will and action within Africa to address those and other related issues. It was to be submitted for endorsement by the ECA Conference of Ministers at its next session in April 1984 at Conakry.

17. Attention was also drawn to the Asia-Pacific Call for Action which was adopted at the Third Asian and Pacific Population Conference held at Colombo in September 1982. 2/

18. Several delegations informed the Committee of the establishment of country-level preparatory committees for the International Conference on Population to be held at Mexico City. Concern was expressed that to date only 30 countries had established such preparatory committees, and countries that had not already done so were urged to set them up.

19. One delegation, referring to the financial aspects of the Conference preparations, suggested that every effort should be made to reduce expenditures from the regular budget in light of the extrabudgetary funds available.

20. With respect to the general preparations for the Conference, many delegations commended the Secretariat for the thorough and careful work it had done in preparing the main background documents for the Committee's consideration, and in co-ordinating the work of the four expert groups whose reports and recommendations formed the substantive basis for the discussions. Several delegates urged that the recommendations of those expert groups should be given full consideration in the discussions. Some delegations expressed reservations about the lack of attention to the unmet needs for family planning in the report of the Expert Group on Fertility and Family.

21. Several delegations emphasized the importance of public information activities both at the international and national levels to raise awareness of the important issues to be considered at the Mexico Conference. It was suggested that the

Secretariat provide countries with posters and other promotional and educational material to increase people's awareness of the Conference and its agenda. It was also suggested that the United Nations Information Centres should be mobilized to support those efforts at the country level. The importance of the non-governmental organizations in the preparatory activities for the Conference was noted by many delegations.

Notes

1/ For the report of the Conference, see United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3.

2/ E/ESCAP/301. See also Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1983, Supplement No. 12 (E/1983/43), para. 562.
