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# **COLOMBO DECLARATION**

## **On**

# **Population and Development**

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Issued by the  
International Conference of Parliamentarians  
On Population and Development  
Held in Sri Lanka, 28 August-1 September, 1979.

*The International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development was held at Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 28 August to 1 September 1979. 58 countries participated. The Conference was co-sponsored by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It was the first time that a Conference of Parliamentarians was being held under the United Nations auspices. The following Declaration on Population and Development was issued at the conclusion of the Conference.*

# COLOMBO DECLARATION

## ***Preamble:***

1. We, Parliamentarians concerned with population and development, assembled in Colombo from fifty-eight different national parliaments for a Conference from August 28 to September 1, 1979, having considered the progress made in the field of population and development since the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974, hereby reaffirm that the principal aim of social, economic and cultural development, of which population goals and policies are integral parts, is to improve levels of living and enrich the quality of life of the people. And we reiterate the necessity of linking population programmes with development plans.

2. Today most countries have recognized that population and development are inextricably bound together and that no population programme should be considered in isolation from policies and plans on health, housing, education, employment, the environment and the use of resources. Equally, there is increasing recognition that development programmes should reflect population policies.

3. However, as the first United Nations review made since Bucharest makes clear, not enough progress in this direction has been achieved. Much more has to be done to make these relationships meaningful in action programmes. The need is both urgent and imperative.

## ***The Need***

4. In the 25 years up to 1975 the total world population increased from just under 2,500 million to over 4,000

million; by the year 2000 it is expected to reach 6,200 million, of which four-fifths will be in the developing countries, with a substantial majority living in desperate poverty.

5. The implications of such increases are staggering. *In the developing countries*, between now and the end of the century, 800 million additional jobs will need to be created. This is more than the entire actively-employed population of the developed world at the present time. Problems of similar magnitude will be posed as far as the provision of food, water and shelter is concerned.

6. *In the developed countries*, per capita consumption of resources—so much higher than in the developing world—has been a cause of much pollution, waste and environmental degradation. It has also contributed to world-wide shortages in key resources. Other questions such as the aging of the population and internal and international migration are becoming important.

7. At the *global level*, continuously expanding human demands have created intolerable pressures on resources, particularly energy. The pressures on biological resources—fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands—are mounting steadily and will continue to do so. Human needs have already begun to outstrip the productive capacity of many local biological systems as currently managed.

8. Peace itself, which is the precondition of development, will be put in jeopardy. For one of the principal threats to peace is the social unrest caused by the accumulation of human fear and hopelessness. It is also noted that forced migration and the deliberate encouragement of citizens of a country to become refugees are disruptive

to the economic development and political stability of countries ill-equipped to receive them.

9. It is clear, moreover, that we can no longer afford to limit our viewpoint to the year 2000. Unless effective action is taken *now* in the field of population and development, world population could continue to rise to 8,000 million or even 10,000 million people. A delay of just one generation in bringing world population to a stable level implies approximately 3,000 million additional persons.

### ***The Objectives***

10. To improve and enrich the quality of life for these increasing numbers—all of them individuals needing food, shelter, clean water, work, education and medical care, as well as a decent environment to live in—and to avoid a continued aggravation of the world population situation in the twenty-first century, the goals and objectives of the New International Economic Order must be urgently implemented. At the same time internal changes are necessary to assure an equitable distribution of resources and a fair and just society within each nation. These achievements would be important in their own right, and, in addition, we know that improved equity and modernization of society lead to the lowering of both mortality and fertility.

11. A massive expansion of resources devoted to development programmes will be required, as well as a restructuring of those programmes. And we will also need a major expansion of preventive health and medical care and the family planning services linked with them. Above all, it will be necessary to ensure that actions are taken at the local level—the grass-roots or village level—and

respond to local demand. The involvement and participation of people themselves in all aspects of social and economic development is of paramount importance.

12. On the *development side*, the Conference believes that it will be necessary to reformulate goals and strategy to include:

- deliberate direction of development efforts towards social justice, fairer income distribution and full employment including a more equitable allocation of such efforts between urban and rural population;
- measures to discourage migration from rural areas to already overcrowded cities and to promote country projects for the better distribution of populations; these should include the encouragement, in the rural areas, of food crops and small industries (especially agricultural and food industries);
- the provision of a wider choice of appropriate technologies;
- emphasis on individual self-reliance and on creating among the people, greater self-confidence, economic self-help, social awareness and political consciousness;
- promotion of the role and status of women within the family and society through effective measures aimed at enhancing and ensuring women's access to education, employment, health services and financial credit;
- the use of public education and information programmes, through all the media, as a principal instrument of development and as a channel for two-way communication.

13. On the *population side*, specific measures should include:

- reduction in mortality, particularly of infants, children and mothers, through effective promotion of basic health services easily accessible to all people, especially in rural areas;
- information about, and provision of, easily accessible family planning services suitable to the particular needs of couples and individuals in diverse social, cultural and economic settings, both urban and rural;
- training and equipping of adequate numbers of paramedical and field workers, including voluntary workers, preferably from the local community itself, to provide the full range of preventive and curative health services and all aspects of family planning, including counselling and delivery of services. Special efforts should be made to encourage the medical profession to design and supervise programmes to train and employ paraprofessionals in these comprehensive health programmes. Maximum use should be made of traditional systems of medicine;
- encouragement of popular acceptance of higher ages of marriage;
- greater participation of men and women, particularly youth, in population and family planning programmes.

### **A Call**

14. This Conference accordingly calls on all *governments* to strive to redress the inequities of economic relationships between countries through the early achievement of the goals and objectives of the New International

Economic Order so as to assist the development of the full economic and human potential of developing countries.

15. In this connection, the Conference believes that rising levels of armaments spending can only detract from the resources available for international assistance and domestic investment in population and development programmes. The Conference calls for the reduction of the arms race by disarmament agreement as a step towards general disarmament and for the utilization of the resources available for the solution of population and development problems.

16. The Conference also calls on governments to work towards fairer distribution of resources within their own countries and towards the creation of more just societies.

17. The Conference calls upon all governments of the developed countries to take meaningful steps to stem the flow of trained personnel from developing to the developed countries till such time as the developing countries have built up an adequate cadre of trained personnel for the implementation of their development programmes with special reference to health and population activities.

18. The Conference further calls on governments to:
- (a) strengthen and expand socio-economic development programmes and to formulate appropriate population policies as an integral part of these plans in consonance with national needs and aspirations;
  - (b) examine population trends in their countries and the impact of these trends on health, education, employment, agricultural and industrial



development, housing and environmental conditions; it being understood that population policy remains a matter of national sovereignty;

- (c) take deliberate steps to promote and strengthen the integration of population programmes in all development activities, including efforts to increase knowledge of the interrelationships between population and development among policy-makers, planners, civil servants, development workers and the people, and integration of population education into all levels of education;
- (d) direct more of the available national resources to the rural areas where the vast majority of the people live and to ensure more equitable and balanced development by providing a comprehensive network of decentralised and community based services to meet basic human needs;
- (e) establish equality between men and women in public, political, economic, social, cultural and family responsibilities, so as to enable women to exercise their basic human rights and to play more effective roles both by formulating policies and by participating in programmes on population and development;
- (f) ensure that all couples and individuals can exercise their basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and have the information, education and means to do so; the responsibility of couples and individuals in the exercise of this right takes into account the needs of their living and future children and their responsibilities towards the community;

- (g) support increased biological and social research into safer, more efficient and more widely acceptable techniques of fertility regulation, including the effective management of family planning programmes;
- (h) increase the overall allocation of international assistance to UNFPA and other related programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, bilateral aid programmes and non-governmental organisations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in order to meet the foreseen large increases in both the need and the demand for assistance from all parts of the developing world, and in order more effectively to integrate population and development programmes designed to improve the quality of life for all people.

***To this end and in the spirit of this Declaration, the Conference calls for an annual target of one billion (one thousand million) dollars in International Population Assistance to be achieved by 1984.***

In order to secure the availability of necessary funds, the Conference recommends that contributing governments clearly designate a meaningful proportion of their development aid to population programmes. The Conference calls for countries receiving assistance to increase their own efforts in the field of population and development correspondingly.

19. The Conference also calls on governments to ensure that international migrants living in countries other than

their own, are accorded basic human rights and protected from exploitation and discrimination. Positive refugee resettlement policies should also be adopted by all countries as part of their national immigration policies according to their economic, political and social capacities.

20. The Conference calls on the *Press and other media* to provide greater positive coverage of population and development issues, so as to increase public awareness and understanding of these matters.

21. The Conference calls on *religious leaders* to take into account the tremendous impact of population pressures on human, spiritual and physical well-being.

22. This Conference makes a special appeal to *Youth* and to all those who are concerned with young people. The future generation has already been born, and indeed 36 percent or over 1,500 million of the world's population are under 15 years of age. They must be informed of the importance of population and development issues through education and communication in and out of school. It is of vital importance that tomorrow's parents and decision makers understand the key linkages between their fertility behaviour and national population change, available food and resources, consumption patterns and the environment, and that they be afforded the benefits of family life education and family planning services to encourage them to space their children and practise responsible parenthood.

23. The Conference calls on the *United Nations and all its Specialised Agencies and Organisations, including the World Bank*, and other inter-governmental agencies including the *Regional Development Banks* to increase

their efforts to sustain rational and humane population policies as an integral part of the development process.

24. The Conference calls on these organisations and agencies to redirect their resources away from capital-intensive projects which generate few jobs towards labour-intensive developments that could provide the massive growth of the employment needed to meet basic human requirements.

25. The Conference calls on all *non-governmental and voluntary organisations* such as IPPF and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), as well as Universities and other educational and research bodies to continue their efforts to help in this work of protecting and enhancing the quality of life.

26. The Conference calls upon the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and other international and regional groupings of parliamentarians to give special attention to this question of population and development and to undertake and support all appropriate actions.

27. The Conference recognises the need for the formation within each nation, where they do not exist, of well-informed committees, groups or associations of parliamentarians to be concerned with the urgent problems of population and development and it urges parliaments and governments to encourage the formation of such committees or groups and to facilitate their work.

28. With a view to helping parliamentarians and other leaders of public opinion to discharge their duty to foster progress in this crucial matter and to monitor that progress, the Conference considers that the formal and informal dialogues on population should continue both internationally and bilaterally.

29. The Conference believes that it would be useful for parliamentarians to meet at the regional level to exchange information and experience gained in their countries and to promote the holding of such regional or sub-regional meetings.

30. ***The Conference calls for a UN World Population Conference in 1984, to review progress made over the ten years since the Bucharest Conference and to propose further actions.***

31. The Conference also believes that the increased international assistance which is here proposed requires that the role and functions of UNFPA be strengthened. In particular, the Conference recommends that the UNFPA should develop into a Population Programme within the United Nations system in order to deal more effectively with the foreseeable changing demands in population and development. The Conference also recognises the need for continuing and close collaboration and cooperation between all inter-governmental, governmental, and non-governmental and voluntary agencies and organisations involved in the population and development field.

32. The Conference believes that the integration of population and development should be considered as a key issue in the International Development Strategy to be adopted for the next decade and calls on the Special Session of the General Assembly, to be held in 1980, to give appropriate recognition to this factor. Parliamentarians should encourage their government representatives to the United Nations to press for action in this sense.

### ***Commitment***

33. The parliamentarians at this Conference, in their capacities as legislators, leaders of public opinion and

as representatives of their constituencies, commit themselves to initiate action to achieve an effective integrated approach to development and population policy.

34. In particular we commit ourselves as *legislators*:

- to establish groups and associations of parliamentarians and other opinion leaders. The purpose of such groups and associations will be to promote legislative and other governmental measures designed to achieve integrated programmes for population and development and to ensure that every development programme includes action on population;
- to seek to ensure that adequate resources are committed to such programmes;
- to monitor the action flowing from policies in population and development and to ensure that these policies are not obstructed by the processes of bureaucracy;
- to work to remove legislative obstacles which may prevent the development of comprehensive population and development policies and programmes.

35. As *leaders of public opinion*, we commit ourselves to make a maximum effort to arouse interest and enthusiasm in questions of population and development and to initiate measures designed to influence our respective governments and legislatures to devote a greater share of their resources to these programmes.

36. Finally, as the *elected representatives of our constituents*, we commit ourselves to work at the local level with local organisations and people so that practical programmes may enable these integrated population and development plans to be put into effect.

The Colombo Declaration on Population and Development was endorsed unanimously by delegations from the following countries which participated:

Australia	Liberia
Austria	Malaysia
Bangladesh	Mexico
Barbados	Morocco
Bolivia	Nepal
Brazil	Netherlands
Canada	Norway
Colombia	Paraguay
Costa Rica	Philippines
Cyprus	Portugal
Denmark	Republic of Korea
Djibouti	Romania
Dominica	Senegal
Egypt	Singapore
Fiji	Spain
Finland	Sri Lanka
France	Sweden
Gambia	Syrian Arab Republic
Germany, Federal Republic	Thailand
Guinea	Tunisia
India	Turkey
Indonesia	United Kingdom
Ireland	United Republic of Cameroon
Israel	United States
Ivory Coast	Upper Volta
Jamaica	Western Samoa
Japan	Yugoslavia
Jordan	Zaire
Kenya	Zambia



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