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the interacademy partnership

IAP Statement on Population Growth 1994

Let 1994 be remembered as the year when the people of the world decided to act together for the benefit of future generations.

The Academies of the world call upon the governments and international decision-makers, especially those at the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development, to take incisive action now and adopt an integrated policy on population and sustainable development on a global scale.

The Problem

The world is undergoing an unprecedented population expansion. Within the span of a single lifetime, world population has more than doubled to 5.5 billion and even the most optimistic scenarios of lower birth rates lead to a peak of 7.8 billion people in the middle of the next century. In the last decade, food production from both land and sea declined relative to world population growth.

The relationships between human population, economic development and natural environment are complex and not fully understood. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the threat to the ecosystem is linked to population size and resource use. Increasing greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion and acid

rain, loss of biodiversity, deforestation and loss of topsoil, shortages of water, food and fuel indicate how the natural systems are being pushed ever closer to their limits.

The developed world, containing less than a quarter of the world population, accounts for 85% of the gross world production and the majority of the mineral and fossil-fuel consumption. Both rich and poor countries add to environmental damage through industrial activity, inappropriate agricultural practices, population concentration and inadequate and inattentive environmental concern. Yet development is a legitimate expectation of less developed and transitional countries.

The Solutions

Our common goal is the improvement of the quality of life for all, both now and for succeeding generations. By this we mean social, economic and personal well-being while preserving fundamental human rights and the ability to live harmoniously in a protected environment. To deal with the social, economic and environmental problems, we must achieve zero population growth within the lifetime of our children.

These goals are achievable given time, political will, intelligent use of science and technology, and human

ingenuity. But only if appropriate policy decisions are taken now to bring about the requisite social change.

How do we go about this task?

We need:

- equal opportunities for women and men in sexual, social and economic life so they can make individual choices about family size;
- universal access to convenient family planning and health services and a wide variety of safe and affordable contraceptive options;
- encouragement of voluntary approaches to family planning and elimination of unsafe and coercive practices;
- clean water, sanitation, broad primary health care, and education;
- appropriate governmental policies that recognize longer-term environmental responsibilities;
- more efficiency and less environmentally damaging practices in the developed world, through a new ethic that eschews wasteful consumption;
- pricing, taxing and regulatory policies that take into account environmental costs, thereby influencing consumption behavior;
- the industrialized world to assist the developing world in combating global and local environmental problems;
- promotion of the concept of "technology for environment";
- incorporation by governments of environmental goals in legislation, economic planning, priority setting and incentives for organizations and individuals to operate in environmentally benign ways;
- collective action by all countries.

Natural and social scientists, engineers and health professionals have their part to play in developing better understanding of the problems, options and solutions, especially regarding:

1. cultural, social, economic, religious, educational, and political factors affecting reproductive behavior, family size and family planning;
2. impediments to human development, especially social inequalities, ethnic, class and gender biases;
3. global and local environmental change, its causes (social, industrial, demographic and political) and policies for its mitigation;
4. improving education and human resource

5. development, with special attention to women;
6. family planning programs, new contraceptive options and primary health care;
7. transitions to less energy- and material-consumptive economies;
8. building indigenous capacity in developing countries in the natural sciences, engineering, medicine, social sciences, management and interdisciplinary studies;
9. technologies and strategies for sustainable development;
10. networks, treaties, and conventions that protect the global commons;
11. world-wide exchanges of scientists in education, training, and research.

Signatories: promotion of the concept of "technology for environment";

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Signatories:

Academy of Sciences of Albania
Australian Academy of Science
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Bangladesh Academy of Sciences
Academy of Sciences of Belarus
National Academy of Sciences of Bolivia
Brazilian Academy of Sciences
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Royal Society of Canada
Caribbean Academy of Sciences
Chinese Academy of Sciences
Columbian Academy of Exact, Physical, and Natural Sciences
Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Cuban Academy of Sciences
Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters
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Estonian Academy of Sciences
Federation of Asian Scientific Academies and Societies
Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters
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Kenya National Academy of Sciences
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