



STATEMENT BY

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**INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR**  
**Fundação Cuidar o Futuro**  
**POPULATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

at the

**International Conference**  
**on Population and Development**

Cairo, 7 September 1994

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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## Introduction

The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life has held and will hold Public Hearings in all the regions of the globe. Across the world, the major concern is **quality of life**. What we are bringing here is the message that they have strongly conveyed to us.

I quote exactly words spelled out in the South Asia consultation: *"Let the direction and pace be the people's choice. Let them be empowered, by a sharp increase in their access to education, communication, health care and technology"*.

In face of this we must ask: Can we go on with more of the same?

The answer from this conference is no. By seeing Population-and-Development as an interrelated process, the Cairo Conference addresses the most important transition of all: the transition from an economy that ignores and marginalises millions of human beings, to a people-centered economy.

The ultimate goal of Population-and-Development is to accord an improved quality of life to the people of the world. Not only to count people but to ensure that people count in Development; that *both their material and non-material security will be the first priority of Development*.



Integrated Population Policies

This has profound and concrete implications for population policies.

- The time is over for the old type of policies.
- The time is over for the imposition of numerical targets on people;
- for the employment of technologies about which people, and specially women, are not informed;
- for governments to exercise coercion on their fellow citizens;
- for international agencies to follow mainly the logics of their own programmes.

Instead, **the time has come** to institute innovative public policies which address Population and Development questions. These policies must meet the following criteria:

- People to whom population programmes are addressed **should** be seen as the **essential decisions-makers** of the choices they have to make, and should never be seen as clients or recipients.
- In each society, population policies must take into account cultural elements, history, the ways in which people relate to one another, to the world, and to nature. Most of all, they have to be guided by the basic values present in each society.
- Specific public policies, such as health and education - and above all education of women - are decisive on the population trends. They should **never** be reversed by **short term economic programmes** - it is not the defense budget that should remain untouched, but health and education budgets.
- As population policies are central to political decision-making, they must be the **responsibility of the State**; but they must always be defined and implemented with the **active participation of the civil society**.
- The intervention of external agencies in population policies is only acceptable when these initiatives are **integrated and subordinated to population policies**, as defined nationally or locally.



### Specific Strategies Against Poverty

Indeed, not "more of the same". In the relationship between Population and Development, **extreme poverty** appears as the **number one problem**. Today, it is common knowledge that, in countries with a high percentage of poor in their population, conventional development strategies **cannot** absorb poverty.

Today, 1 in every 4 persons on this planet lives in destitution. If, in today's economy, we are unable to accommodate the poor; if in this generation, we are not able to cope with poverty and to invent new forms of management of wealth and resources, what can we do during the next 30 years, at the end of which time we will have 3 billion more? Then, one in two of the world's people will be poor.

Let me add yet another statistic. Today, one in 5 people in the world fall into the narrow age group of 15 to 24 years. These young people require our most urgent attention. Not only are they facing terrible levels of unemployment, not only do they constitute much of the world's floating population, but they are also the parents of the future.

If we fail them, we create the largest generation of impoverished people in our history, people who must raise, in poverty, the children of the future. Here is thus a focal point for our attacks on poverty.

Specific strategies against poverty are not only a necessity in an ethical sense, but are also a must politically. Many of the specific strategies against poverty have already been spelled out and some of their elements have been tried in various places: the political and institutional recognition of the role of the informal sector, land redistribution, or credit for small-scale enterprises. What we need now is the imagination to elaborate further those strategies; we need the political commitment to make them effective, we need the elimination of bureaucratic restraints to allow such initiatives to work. Let us be clear about these strategies. They must be decided and implemented as an urgent, economically viable and humanly caring response to extreme poverty.

