

Je tire les
exemplaires
similaires

après en page 2
après la présentation
de la Commission, oui,
mais déjà
renoncé.

DECLARATION AT THE THIRD PREPCOM
OF THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

New York, 5 April 1994

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President

of the Independent Commission for Population and Quality of Life

The Rio Conference has seen "nature" enter history through the renewed consciousness of the international community.

The Cairo Conference is likewise the right moment for a heightened awareness so that "population" may emerge as the subject of all social transformation processes.

We discover that we are in a finite world, but, paradoxically, instead of limiting us, this awareness becomes an imperative to widen the way we see Population and its Quality of Life, within the context of social, economic, environmental, political constraints and possibilities.

The population question when focussed with the lens of Quality of Life points to the urgency of what must be done for people to feel free and secure, to have their destiny in their own hands.

Again and again, in the three regional public hearings the Independent Commission has conducted so far, we have listened to the same conviction - population is people, people who live and die; suffer and love; struggle and hope, participate and decide. At the first of our consultations in Harare, the representatives of more than 40 NGOs concerned with population said it eloquently: "We deserve a better Quality of Life."

Independent Commission for Population and Quality of Life
Commission Indépendante sur la Population et la Qualité de Vie



The objectives, the actions and the means of implementation so comprehensively spelled out in the draft of the Cairo document show clearly the path ahead and the urgency to follow it.

It is imperative to find the conditions for harmonizing population dynamics with the capacity of each society to integrate, without rupture, the consequences of such dynamics.

What is at stake is the physical and organizational carrying capacity of the world

- . in creating resources for people,
- . in absorbing the wastes of an increasingly urban-shaped life-style,
- . in encompassing the widespread rationale behind massive production in delocalized units,
- . in overcoming the degrees of want that the world never saw before at such scale.

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What is at stake is the willful, intellectual and compassionate caring capacity to attend to the needs of today's and tomorrow's population.

Thus, coherent and integrated public policies and new rules and instruments of governance at all levels are needed in order to tackle realistically all population issues in their interfaces with other global societal issues.

Indeed, we may wonder what is the coherence of a rather generalised concern with population dynamics among many leaders of the world when the cultural and economic conditions for education and for reproductive health services are absent from the political priorities and programs of government.

We may ask :

- . What is the outcome, over a long-term, of health services that are not accompanied by education capable of leading to informed consent and responsible choice?
- . What is the outcome of an educational and health care program at the very moment that economy-centered policies - not people-centered ones as they should be - cut blindly and irresponsibly the funds for education and health in national budgets?

The first recommendation of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life flows directly from these remarks.

Reproductive rights and reproductive health care in all its dimensions and services are a powerful way through which women can become effectively the ultimate decision-makers in the process of giving birth. We understand that there is an emerging consensus about the primacy of the individual, and specifically of women, in this personal and private sphere of their lives.

But the Independent Commission would like to probe into this question.

- What does it entail - to say that women are decision-makers in what concerns their reproductive rights?
- . Is it compatible with the absence of women in all other public processes of decision-making?
- . Is it compatible with a practical, if not legal, marginalisation of women in society?
- . Is it compatible with industry based upon women's exploitation in their sexuality, the very realm where their reproductive rights are at stake?

Is it compatible with the rampant sexual abuse of children in so many diversified situations?

Let us not fool ourselves. This entails the political imperative for women, in every society, to acquire full dignity as human beings.

It entails everywhere a fundamental change in mentality and in the cultural and social patterns of representations and behaviour.

It may entail a radical shift in legislation, going beyond traditional norms and beyond long-standing ideological battles.

The question then becomes clear: are member-states and indeed the diverse societies around the world, ready to undertake such fundamental changes, so that the human person, in this case women, may be the subject of their own lives?

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These questions acquire a particular poignancy when we focus on the growing rate of teenagers' pregnancies.

This is a worldwide issue asking for concerted, innovative and urgent action.

The "conspiracy of silence" that has surrounded sexuality as a fundamental dimension of the human person has left young people at the mercy of uncontrolled distortion of sexuality and must therefore be broken.

The Independent Commission gives a high priority to the development of innovative ways to face the causes of teenager pregnancies.



In the search for values with which most political religious leaders are concerned, the realm of sexuality constitutes an indisputable field for further conceptualisation.

Young people have to be met where they are, to be stimulated and given the space to organize themselves so as to educate each other in a massive mobilization of youth towards their own fulfilment.

The Independent Commission intends to pursue its regional hearings with a growing participation of young people in order to contribute to the urgent process of self-knowledge and self-empowerment, and to devise adequate programs and services that adapt the reproductive health care rationale to the youth culture at the end of this century.

This can be, in our mind, a decisive contribution to the population issue.

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The second recommendation of the Independent Commission concerns the interlinkages the draft document refers to, namely the interdependence between "growth in numbers/persistent poverty/social and economic inequalities/wasteful consumption/threats to the environment".

Already a few years ago the Brundtland report stated that "population/food security/loss of species and generic resources/energy/industry/human settlements, are all connected and cannot be treated in isolation one from another".

This same idea was verbalised at the recent Public Hearing of North America region the Independent Commission hold in Washington. A word came up persistently: "inter-connectedness". In this context, the Independent Commission underlines the urgency to address the interlinkage between population/persistent poverty and unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

The actions undertaken to reach population balance and stability cease to be relevant if poverty is not fought against at the same time and if production and consumption patterns go on unchecked in the economic assumptions that continue to support them.

There is a growing evidence that it is necessary and possible to draw up specific strategies against poverty within the overall development efforts of each country.

Obviously, the Social Development Summit will be the time to bring to completion the work already undertaken at the international level on the ingredients of such strategies.

The Independent Commission considers however that it is indispensable to elaborate on the feasibility of specific strategies against poverty in the context of the Cairo Conference, so as to provide a secure ground for population balance and Quality of Life of all human beings.

Likewise, the Independent Commission will be undertaking a broad consultation on how the logic of the current modes of production and consumption can be re-directed and re-orientated so as to use at all levels and in all societies the tools of the free markets for the ultimate goal of making people free.

Finally, our third recommendation flows directly from this concern and addresses the question of the resources needed.

Given the experience of the recent past, the scope and feasibility for extensive re-allocation through the next two decades may be more limited than hitherto thought. The Independent Commission shares the view that there are alternative forms of international taxation which should now be seriously considered.

Without excluding other paths, we intend to explore the feasibility of a tax on international financial transactions. Given the present levels of international financial flows - of some trillion dollars everyday - even a transaction tax as small as 0.1 percent or less could realise sums that would meet the resource needs of which we are all aware.

There are certainly many questions to be addressed here. But it is the conviction of the Independent Commission that the gravity of the situation demands that such a quantum leap in putting economy at the service of people may be taken with courage and determination.

To conclude, we cannot limit ourselves to the short term - the long term may be more urgent.

We cannot limit ourselves to discreet actions and programs - all-encompassing goals are required if we want honestly to meet challenges of a global nature.

Time is ripe for new and daring steps. The deadline for positive action is not in a remote future - it is tomorrow.

