



STATEMENT BY

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo

President of the

**INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR
POPULATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

at the

World Summit for Social Development

Copenhagen, 9 March 1995



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President of

The Independent Commission for Population and Quality of Life

Dear Mr President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life shares the core vision for social development conveyed by this Conference. And it does so with a tremendous sense of urgency and responsibility towards the future.

Indeed, if the international community is not able to cope with the social development of all the people on this planet today; if it has in its midst 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty and millions, portrayed in a poignant way in the NGO Forum, with an undue share of suffering; if it has generated in the very hub of the rich countries decline in work opportunities and marginalisation of growing sectors of the population; how can it cope with the expected increase in population during the coming decades - from 2.5 billion according to the low estimates (equivalent to 2 more Chinas) to 4.1 billion, according to the medium estimate (the equivalent of the whole world of 75 on top of today's world ?

The Rio and the Cairo Conference have clearly shown that the factors that create threats for human life on the planet, that shake human security and may endanger collective survival and security, are the result of the combined effect of population growth and poverty with wasteful patterns of consumption and with damaging technologies.

Social development cannot ignore those factors.

On the contrary. A realistic programme of action for social development has to go to the roots of the problems at stake.

The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life is unanimously convinced that this is only possible if the international community is ready to challenge the unspoken and implicit social contract underlying such problems. We welcome the reference made by the Secretary General to a new social contract.

We believe firmly that the social contract in societies where people will be empowered, free and participative will find a new dynamic balance between different social groups, very specially between men and women; and will give a more humane face to the system of production.

Such a new social contract will provide the coherent frame within which poverty, unemployment and exclusion can be effectively fought.

A decisive element of this new social contract is, in the eyes of the Commission, a reshaped gender contract. New possibilities of participation both in family responsibilities and in professional and civic responsibilities will then be open to men and women alike.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

If discrimination against women does not end and if women do not assume an active role at all levels of decision-making, the problems confronting humankind today won't be solved.

Only a social contract where women and men will be freed from the patriarchal distribution of roles and power between the sexes will allow women to contribute fully to an improved quality of life for all, and will empower women in such a way that we can then realistically plan for the eradication of poverty.

In this context, we consider:

- that specific strategies against poverty, worked out with concrete targets at the national level, must aim, without hesitation, at women as their central focus;
- that social policies answering the basic needs of women, and, particularly, addressing their unmet needs in health and education, should be the cornerstone of social

development in the coming decade. In this context, the Commission strongly supports the 20/20 proposal as a decisive tool for progress on this path.

The social contract must also be transformed in the assumptions underlying its production and consumption scheme. Most of all, it must include a radical shift in what has been already called the natural contract.

This is what the women's movement, represented in hundreds of NGOs has been saying during these days at the Forum and at this tribune.

New costs deriving from choice of technologies, production of wastes, requirements of marketing have to be internalized.

The consequences of such a process of clarification will be far fetched. Policies concerning price-formation and fiscal charges will arise. Patterns of consumption will change and will move nearer to conditions of a dignified quality of life for all. Trade, which is blind to the needs of humans and of nature, will be regulated and its gains redistributed with equity.

Likewise the nature and number of work opportunities will change and be enriched.

It is an urgent task to draw up a new understanding and definition of work, as it evolves specially from women's manifold experiences - ranging from the meaning and conditions of the informal sector in so many countries of the South to the consequences of the concept of active society evolving in the industrialized countries of the North.

As a consequence of the changes in social contract, economy will have to redirect its goals. From the current dominant approach, it will have to evolve towards an economy always geared to people's quality of life.



This is why the Commission considers that the appraisal of decisions made at the international level and concerning directly the basis of the social contract needs to be channelled into a new international agreement and put into open discussion and negotiation between governments and civil society.

The social contract, seen in these different dimensions, is not a far away optional scenario or even less an utopian dream. It is an imperative of ethical responsibility if we want to reach a minimum level of equity and justice at a global scale.

Mr President,

To make all this effective, the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life is convinced that there is a strong need for an all-encompassing concept and attitude to respond to the urgency of the steps to be made.

We "borrow" from the women's movement the concept of the politics of care as the frame for the political decision-making required at this stage of humankind's history.

In this way, responsible attentiveness will be created.

Commitment will go beyond words and will be channelled into concerned, competent and compassionate action.

The politics of care, we are firmly convinced, will help to create "the enabling environment" by which life can be sustained, nourished and strengthened.

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