

We commit ourselves to continuing to take action to meet needs related to population and development and to enable other youth to join us in our activities. The types of action we commit ourselves to include:

- * Promoting peer education through workshops and seminars; and through vocational, leadership and organisational training;
- * Involving, motivating and educating peers through artistic activities such as music and drama;
- * Implementing peer counseling and awareness-raising through one-on-one interaction, group discussions, newsletters, newspaper columns and radio programmes;
- * Organising services for peers in schools and recreation centres as well as outreach to peers on the street and other non-traditional settings;
- * Creating jobs for peers through cooperatives and businesses;
- * Educating parents and other members of the community;
- * Lobbying local, national and regional governments and businesses, banks, the media and inter-governmental structures;
- * Organising public demonstrations;
- * Creating networks of interpersonal support, information sharing, cooperation and inter-organisational collaboration.

Our strategies for action encompass the immediate, medium and long-term. Our priority is for words to be translated into action.

Young people's voices must be heard if the UN is to respond to the changing needs of our world. This Consultation has shown the importance of providing a common platform for young people to express their concerns and aspirations and to propose action for the future.

We have a vision of a world without the factors of economic injustice and dire social and individual needs; a world where all live in a spirit of mutual respect, cooperation, tolerance, peace and justice. May you remember our words and hear their strength and through them understand our commitment and our energy to act.

Cairo, 4th September 1994

The full text of the Cairo Youth Declaration and further information are available at the Youth Caucus Meetings during the NGO Forum of the ICPD.

CAIRO YOUTH DECLARATION - A SUMMARY

We, more than 100 young women and men from all regions of the world and a diversity of cultural, religious and political backgrounds, have been actively participating in an International NGO Youth Consultation on Population and Development held prior to the ICPD in Cairo. This youth consultation was a collaborative NGO initiative organised by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISHUN), Society for International Development (SID), World Assembly of Youth (WAY), World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), World Council of Churches (WCC), World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSH), and World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA), with the participation of the Independent Commission for Population and Quality of Life.

We believe that young people are agents of change. "Young people make up most of the world. More than half of the world's population is below the age of 25. About a third are between the ages of 10 and 24, of whom eighty per cent live in developing countries of the world." These were the words of Dr Nafis Sadik who opened our youth consultation. It is clear that youth are, and can be, the present actors and leaders in our societies as well as those of the future. We recognise the importance of population and development concerns as they are the issues affecting our daily lives. These issues are central to our commitment, sense of responsibility and action to affect change in the world, believing that they are inextricably linked together with the issues of international economic inequity between the countries of the North and those of the South.

Throughout our discussions we found that we shared three main priorities:

1. The need for population concerns to be explicitly and consistently integrated with development in the context of a just and equitable international economic system.
2. A strong focus on the need for youth education and mobilisation in the areas of adolescent health, sexual and reproductive health, the environment, human rights, and political and economic systems.
3. A sense that now is the time for action: an expression of our strong commitment to take responsibility to act at the individual, organisational, national and international levels.



The Youth Consultation agreed that:

1. Population growth is an important factor that must be addressed in order to achieve sustainable development and quality of life.
2. In many cases, the resources available to children are already diminished by economic injustices within and between countries.
3. Over-consumption in more-developed countries, exploitative "development" policies and practices, unfair terms of trade and corruption all contribute to the gap in living standards between more and less-developed countries. The cancellation of debt or the reduction in debt servicing is required as is education about unfair trade and structural adjustment programmes that make sustainable development unobtainable in less developed countries.
4. Poverty damages the environment and further weakens the possibility for sustainable development.
5. Education is a lifelong process which allows individuals to weigh up options and make better decisions for life.
6. Education on the environment, human rights and political and economic systems is vital in enabling young people to conceive new and improved mechanisms for social development.
7. Education of adolescents promotes and enhances harmonious and healthy relationships. Education and services which facilitate individual safe sexual behaviour do not encourage promiscuity. On the contrary, it helps us to respect the integrity of our body and our lives and encourages us to have a better understanding of our responsibilities.
8. We acknowledge the grave consequences of our sexual behaviour and the need to be able to take precautions against unwanted pregnancies and STDs in order to prevent death through HIV/AIDS, unsafe abortion and inadequate care during pregnancy and childbirth. Particular attention is required to assist men in taking their responsibilities seriously which would go far in promoting mutual respect as the basis for equality between men and women.
9. Education for pregnancy prevention is vital as is support for teenage mothers, especially in regard to continuing their education.

10. Expressing concern at the degree of maternal deaths as a result of unsafe abortion, and recognising the existence of cultural and religious differences and the importance of respecting these traditions, we believe that both illegal and legal abortions should be monitored for their safety without encouraging recourse to abortion.

11. The empowerment of women is crucial to the issues of population and development and as Youth NGOs we commit ourselves to be models and advocates of this practice.

12. Family planning and reproductive health are vital for the promotion of a healthy life for all, particularly in the light of the growing spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs.

13. Partnership in Population and Development is not only power-sharing but also creates mutual respect and benefits. This is achieved through each other's strengths with cooperation and tolerance.

14. The speedy democratisation of inequitable UN structures and a shift from military to social spending is required.

15. If the UN is serious in its commitment to the participation of young people in building a more just world for the future then it must increase its support for Youth NGOs and provide the necessary resources for Youth NGOs to meet together in 1995, the 10th Anniversary of International Youth Year.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The need to mobilize youth as agents of change was a recurring theme in the Consultation. This is also supported in the ICPD Programme for Action: "Youth should be active in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities that have a direct impact on their daily lives" (6.15). Many youth around the world have taken leadership in meeting needs related to population and development. Their commitment and expertise must be recognized and resources allocated in order to strengthen and expand their initiatives to more of the youth population.

During the Consultation, we shared among ourselves many examples of successful youth-led ventures. While individual actions generally address specific needs, the models for youth action are often transferable from one issue to another. For example, peer education and counselling techniques can be adapted to a wide variety of issues.