

## Introduction

The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life has been conducting Public Hearings in all regions of the world. We have listened to hundreds of NGOs, community leaders, health experts, public officials. Their voices convey a message we cannot ignore.

They say: *"Let the direction and pace be people's choice. Let them be empowered, by a sharp increase in their access to education, communication, health care and technology".*

In Harare throughout the Public Hearing a group of young people kept saying: *"Who will listen to my voice? Who will be moved? Is there an echo?"*.

In face of this we ask: **Can we go on with just more of the same? We don't think so.**

By focusing on Population-and-Development, the Cairo Conference addresses the most important transition of all: **the social processes at work in the world** - not one perceived only by experts, not from one economic ideology to another. Rather the



transition from an economy that ignores and marginalizes millions of human beings to an economy that reasserts itself as a means to achieve well-being, quality of life of human beings. The transition from a money and profit centered economy to a **people-centered economy**.

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## Integrated Population Policies

Turning to **population policies**, time is over

- . for what a group of medical doctors in South Asia called the "chain of coercion";
- . for imposing numerical targets on people, sometimes as a way to guarantee the promotion of dispensers of family planning;
- . for spreading technologies which people, and specially women, are not informed about;
- . for governments to exercise coercion on their fellow citizens;
- . for international agencies to ignore the frontiers both of sovereignty and of culture and human dignity.

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Instead, time has come for a decisive innovation in the public policies coming together into population and development questions:

- . People to whom population programmes are addressed are never to be seen as clients or recipients, the irreplaceable decision-makers of the choices they have to make;
- . population policies have to take into account, in each society, elements of culture, history, ways of relating to others, to the world, to nature. Most of all, they have to be guided by and rooted in the ingrained values present in each society,

- . whenever specific public policies, like education - and particularly education of women - and health are known to have a great impact on the population policies they should never be submitted to conjunctural difficulties of the economy (it is not defense that should remain untouched but health and education);
- . as population policies are part and parcel of an integrated approach to society's living forces, and their establishment central to political decision-making, they should be the responsibility of the State in dialogue with the representatives of the civil society:
- . the intervention of external agencies in population policies is only acceptable when it is integrated and subordinated to the population policy as defined nationally or locally.

International co-operation should be encouraged on two urgent tasks:

- to imagine and to establish "models" of primary health care services with their reproductive health services, including family planning;
- to imagine and to devise "models" for providing basic education for women using modern audio-visual tools.



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## Specific Strategies Against Poverty

The Bucarest Conference, aware of the link between poverty and fertility rates, entrusted "development" with the main responsibility towards stabilization of the population. The possibility of poverty to be absorbed by the process of development was then a widespread conviction.

Twenty years later, it has become common knowledge that, in countries with a high percentage of poor among their population, development cannot absorb poverty.

Moreover, *Fundação Cuidar o Futuro* evidence is striking about the relationship between economic growth and fertility rate decline. While Europe took 150 years throughout the industrial process to reach the fertility rate needed for the replacement level, the same transition in the Republic of Korea - starting at 6.1 fertility rate in the 60's - took barely 25 years, 6 times less!

Today, 1 in every 4 persons on this planet lives in destitution. If we are unable to incorporate in the economy and in social care the poor of today, what can we do during the next 30 years with 3

billion more? If we are not able in this generation to cope with poverty and to invent new forms of management of wealth and resources, in 30 years that ratio will be one to two, half of the world population. Then it will be too late.

The consequences of this prospect for population policies are radical. No traditional "population programme" can effectively work under destitute and infra-human conditions. Nor can people be the object of massive "population programmes".

Specific strategies against poverty are not only a necessity in an ethical sense, but are also a must politically. Hunger, limited access to drinking water, to sanitation and health services, and the deterioration of hygiene and of housing, constitute the lot for a growing proportion of people living in most of the regions of the world, notably in the mega-cities. It is not just the fact of appalling misery and deprivation for fellow humans which we must recognize here, but the continuing threat to the economic and political evolution of those societies.

Many of the specific strategies have already been spelled out and even tried in various places: strategies such as 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 political commitment to make these work, or the elimination of bureaucratic restraints to allow such initiatives to work. Let us be clear about these strategies. They are the response to extreme poverty considered by the Commission **the Number One problem of Population-and-Development.**

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## Collective Survival

It is today confirmed that the damage to the environment and the threat to human life on the planet through the depletion of the resources and the accumulation of wastes is the result of the joint effect of population-and-consumption-growth.

Therefore, to change the patterns of consumption and production **is a condition of collective survival. It is unacceptable to act on population growth without acting, at the same time, on consumption growth.**

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The dominant economic paradigm no longer works. It has emphasized production; it has treated the exploitation of natural resources as if it were a form of income backed by an inexhaustible investment fund; it failed to account for environmental degradation by reflecting its costs in pricing structures; and it assumed that higher consumption implied proportionately enhanced welfare.

We are not speaking here only of moral questions addressed to individual consciences to slow down consumption, to change their life-styles. What we refer to is the change of the very patterns of

consumption, of the way offer and demand are constituted in contemporary society. What is addressed here is **the need for the "reversal of the logic" of the system.**

The whole equation of production and consumption, inherited from the industrial revolution and transposed to unexpected levels of material performance by the informatic revolution, needs to be re-examined.

Economics needs to be re-directed in its goals and diversified in its modes of operation. **Either economics deals with human beings as the central concern or there is no solution** at the world level for the interdependent connections of population/development/environment.

We are now convinced that a major political initiative has to take place among the community of nations and the emerging global civil society.

Aware of the issues at stake, pressed by the "collective survival" imperative, a high-power multi-disciplinary task-force should be formed to study and work out the articulation of the



decisive factors of : human beings and production/production and employment/ growth and consumption/human and nature.

### Conclusion

No State alone, no multilateral organization alone, can come to grips with these huge problems. All live forces in each society and on the international scene are needed. Civic society at international level must take up its own responsibilities.

As the Nobel Prize Rigoberta Menchú said at our Latin-American Consultation:

*"Nuestra gente es ansiosa de futuro".* "Our people are searching anxiously for a future".

May the community of nations help to build such future.