



1

COMMISSION'S DECLARATION TO CAIRO CONFERENCE

I - POPULATION, THE HUMAN FACTOR - UNDISPUTABLE CONNECTIONS

1. Population in the nexus population/development/environment

A "fresh vision" can only spring forth from the growing awareness of the interdependence of different factors at play. (Such is the demand of the systems science based on the theory of complexity.) To search for a "fresh vision" on international population questions<sup>1</sup> implies at the outset the analysis of the system population/development/environment.

The inteconnections among the three elements are well known today even if some *their* relationships are still under close scrutiny in the research conducted by several disciplines.

The most obvious connection is the interplay taking place under our eyes between rate of population growth and economic development. From one side high rates of population growth exercise great demands on economic development - more food production, more education, more housing, more health services to be provided, more jobs to be created, better organization of society, all mean more financial resources and may lead a State to a stagnant economic performance. From the other side high rates of economic development (e.g. the newly industrialized or rapidly industrializing countries) exercise a definite constraint on the rate of population growth and have led the industrialized countries to a very slow population growth.

<sup>1</sup> main mandate given to the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, in the Mission Statement elaborated by the sponsors



COMMISSION'S DECLARATION TO CAIRO CONFERENCE

I. ~~World - population / world development~~  
the ~~micro. view~~ <sup>view</sup> for it

#1 ↓

A "fresh vision" can only spring forth from the growing awareness of the interdependence of different factors at play. Such is the demand of the system science based on the theory of complexity. To search for a "fresh vision" on international population questions implies at the outset the analysis of the system.

II. Human responsibilities + public policies  
in the ~~pol. / dev. fields~~

- Resp. das UN
- Resp. do país

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

III. Some key factors for a fresh vision on the ~~equat. pop / dev.~~

- polít. et a jobs
- políticas de cores
- saúde
- impostos

- polít. integradas

These interconnections raise a fundamental political and ethical question. Under what conditions are societies and the world as a whole able to achieve the balance between population growth and the economic development necessary to enable people to enjoy quality of life?



In the face of the figures known - 5.6 billion people on earth of which 1.3 billion live under extreme poverty conditions<sup>2</sup> - it is clear that economic development has to be adequately and efficiently fostered. However the conditions of the economy in the last decades have shown that to do so at the world level probably appears to most decision makers as an impossible task. Hence the often one-sided approach to reduce population growth without taking into account the other factors at play.

As the broad nexus evoked here shows even the dual relationship population/development has to be broadened so as to include the interactions with the factor "environment". By doing so a new series of linkages becomes visible. Population exhausts environmental resources, depletion of environment undermines development, scarcity of resources induces poverty and with it population growth in most cases. Even the apparently simple relation population/economic development changes when environment is taken into account. The role of hidden but decisive factors (e.g. technology in the process of development) becomes then a decisive one.

Each of the three elements can unfold itself into its numberless factors. A simple causality between just two of them (e.g. population growth and migration) may be analysed for the sake of simplicity but has always to be corrected by the multiple interactions and decisive factors at stake.

<sup>2</sup> Human Development Report 1994, UNDP, New York, 1994, pg.



The question will become then the following: in this complexity what is the point of entry? By which part do we tackle the whole set of linkages?

B1 [ The answer can only come, ~~in the Independent Commission's perspective~~, from a ethical principle. We affirm the absolute primacy of the human person over all economic, technological, biological, political processes and objectives. Thus the element "population", pointing out to "people" directly, acquires the dimension of a human factor. In the complex system contained in the nexus population/development/environment, "population" can never be an instrument of the changes to be introduced in the main factors of the other two elements.

B1 [ To consider "population" in this perspective is to affirm its unique feature of a human factor, where the subject is always -and without any solution of continuity - the human person in its social reality.

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



Confirming this assumption we have the echo of many witnesses at the Regional Public Hearings conducted so far in 4 different regions. ....

If there is urgency - and there is! - it is not only about one of the factors but about each of them and, most of all, of their interfaces, always geared to the quality of life of the human person.

B1 [ At the end of the XX century such is the fundamental question of civilization we have to face: human beings are not interchangeable with "things" or mechanisms; rather they are the subject and ultimate goal of all social processes.

It is this perception that is reflected in the weight given by the document for the

Cairo Conference to the individual choices and decisions.

2. FROM NUMBERS TO QUALITY OF LIFE

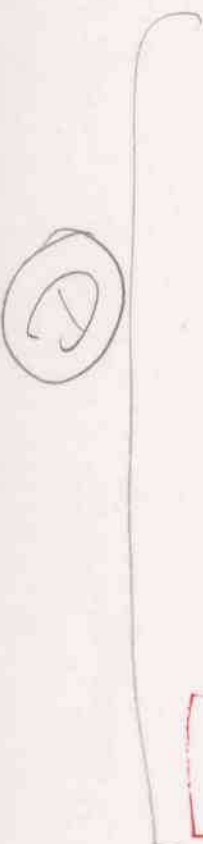
The primacy given to the human person is reflected in the mandate of the Commission: quality of life refers to a subject, the individual human person or the human persons together, that is, "population".

Besides investigating what in fact is contained in the expression "quality of life", it is necessary to unveil the tools that can account for the contents of "population".



Indeed, it is surprising to see that the different sciences that describe and explain "population" are separated from each other, giving specific unrelated accounts of its behaviour. Such a separation is clearly shown in the fact that, internationally, "population" has become the field of demographic sciences.

A remarkable body of analysis has been developed by demography. We owe to demography clear pictures of the situation in different countries and in the world as well as some interesting interpretations. In a way even the Cairo Conference is an answer to the warning signals demographic sciences have been sending to the world. But, as it happens with other quantitative-led sciences, demography has to be blend with other sciences whenever it goes beyond the analysis. The problems of "population" questions cannot be formulated by demography alone. Much less can public policies be a mere adjustment to demographic trends and projections.



Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



In fact, demography provides technical information, diagnosis and even possible corrections. However the explanation about the motivations leading people to the area where the most private decisions meet the public sphere of society's organization lay outside the scope of demography or of any other science.

As in all other aspects of scientific interpretation of reality there is a moral responsibility which is situated on another level. It is into that moral responsibility that technical information is fed - moral responsibility encompasses the data from science, by incorporating them into its body of thought and using it to formulate the problems and to stimulate the thrust of the answers to those problems.

In the Regional Public Hearings the Commission became aware in many ways of the reaction people have against being dealt with by quantitative indicators. As one witness said :

*"The demographic indicators shouldn't be used to describe the lives of people."*

He went further denouncing the primacy of numbers over understanding of fundamental needs, feelings, aspirations and traditions. He considered it an abuse of numbers and thus labelled it "the Number-gate scandal".

In the same Public Hearing a long-standing researcher from the International Institute for Population Sciences in Delhi said:

*"The obsession with numbers, opercentage, ratios, has to be given up if people themselves have to come first. ~~The parameters of assessment have to change from quantitative to qualitative.~~ (...) Looking at the population situation as a problem of numbers has seriously damaged the quality of life of people living in the countries where the*



[[[[[ A clear example of the necessary shift in articulating issues of global population is the appeal "to accelerate demographic transition". Of course the concept is a useful one both for demographers and for policy-makers. By indicating the pace at which the population of a given society stabilizes itself, it helps to determine the efforts needed to ensure a dignified life for all the people. It helps to connect the short- and the long-term. Such a stabilization cannot be a real motivation for people. But the social and economic conditions which, in the present understanding of the connection between "population" and "development", go together with such a stabilization, can be and are a strong motivation. Improvement of "quality of life" is not only a human goal deserving to be put forward but is also a factor interwoven with the process of stabilization of population.



The most eloquent statement was made by a woman from Bangladesh.

*"Women have children, they don't have population."*

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

3. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN A WORLD IN TRANSITION

Every person is today at the juncture of multiple transition processes taking place in the world. There is a transition from still rural connected societies to modern mentality and ways of living. There is the transition from a society where children are also viewed as adding to the family labour-force and to the old age security of the parents to a society where everything leads to give priority to the attainment of a high quality of life in the context of the modern times. There is transition from authoritarian, feudal systems to democratic regimes. In many places there is the transition from centrally planned economies to a free market economy. There is the transition from a society where women, though playing an important role in the private sphere, were invisible in the public sphere, to a society where women are taking more and more part in all activities of society. This transition concerns in the most profound way the interplay of roles of women and men.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



It is very important to study how these different transition processes reinforce or annulate each other and how the individual person - as decision-maker over the most complex realm, that is, his/her life - perceives the interplay of demands and constraints of the transition processes of which he/she is often an unconscious part.

3.1. Self-determination of women

There are more elements than simple questions of mastering the reproductive process in women's decisions. There are sometimes erratic behaviours that ask for the contribution of data from different processes at work.





8

[[[One interesting example is found in the demographic data concerning the countries that have already reached a stabilisation period. Observing some countries whose fertility rate is below the replacement level (e.g., my own country, Portugal with a fertility rate of 1.42) we can ask ourselves if there is not within the demographic transition a period where low economic performance and a weak social protection combine themselves to produce "unexpected" falls of the fertility rate.

One hypothesis is possible. Though able to determine the number and spacing of their children they have fewer children (one or none) than they wish because they carry a heavy double burden of family and professional responsibilities. In the European countries not only do they care for their children (representing more than 20% of the households where they are the sole bread-winner), but they also know that, as old age of their parents approach (as first generation of children of smaller families they will have to compensate for the lack of social equipments and institutions. Such manifold tasks make the bearing of more children a rather heavy for some even unworkable - prospect.

In the specific case of the transition from centrally planned economies to the market economy, it should be added the insecurity brought by some societal changes, namely the derogation to ILO Convention on protection of pregnancy, the rate of unemployment, the drastic change from maternity leave of 1-3 years to the standard 90 days, the disappearance of child-care facilities which used to be part of the social function of public enterprises. ]]]]]

The responsibility of women in relation to their reproductive rights appears as one decisive element in the 4-decade old process of their self-determination.



9

Once civil rights acquired there is still a long way to proceed -as the peoples of former colonized countries very well know. Self-determination has to reach the core of the emancipatory process -the specific cultural identity of the group it concerns. No doubt that the cultural identity of women is strongly linked and to some degree determined by their role in the reproductive process. (Even the use of "reproductive" rights terminology emphasizes the importance of potential motherhood in women's lives.) In this context full personhood asks for a personal assumption of one's own reproductive life. Hence the necessary stress on all rights connected with bearing a child, most of all the full acknowledgement of women's decision-making capacity.

Women in all regions, specially in countries with long experience with "population programs" claim their rights as subjects whenever special programs are designed. Indeed, it is clear that no program should be devised without the participation of women. No program should be implemented without the correct information given to women and their consent explicitly given.

### 3.2. Self-responsibilization of men

The "empowerment of women" plays a decisive role. In the Western Africa Public Hearing one woman questioned:

*"What is the use of ~~empowering~~<sup>enabling</sup> women if there is not an enabling environment?"*

Indeed, what is the use of getting women aware of their rights and capable to exercise them, if the web of family and society relationships in which they are caught prevent them from exercising their rights?



II - POPULATION POLICIES

1. DYNAMIC POPULATION BALANCE

While emphasizing individuals' responsibilities and rights, the Commission wants to stress the incorporation of society's goals into the individual lives. In her testimony before the Commission the Peace Nobel prize Rigoberta Menchu said :

*"Without community, there is no life. We have a collective responsibility, balanced as equals. (...) There is a collective contribution, but morality implies also a responsibility for the collective mission."*

This "collective responsibility" can only be awakened by a vision capable of mobilizing the individual consciousness. In the preliminary work done by the Commission we attempted to formulate the cultural foundation able to give meaning to society's goals in relation to population and development. The idea is one of equilibrium among factors that different stages of the world civilization.

(pedir M.me B. o texto em ingles do que eu disse na II sessao sobre isto.)