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Youth: All-week meeting

BY C. GERALD FRASER

International donors and over-consuming Northerners were criticized Wednesday at the opening session of the Youth Consultation on Population and Development and Egypt's Minister of Population and Family, Maher Mahran, said that since five billion people will be represented

at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the meeting "will not be bruised by the absence of any country."

Nafis Sadik, the secretary general of the International Conference on Population and Development, and executive

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Youth Forum starts sessions

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director of the United Nations Population Fund, also addressed the start of the first ICPD-related event, telling youths that 90 percent of the Programme of Action has already been agreed.

Dr. Sadik also said the UN system should work with closer collaboration with youth organizations throughout the world.

The Youth Consultation began yesterday at the Arab Scout Center and will run through Sunday evening. About 110 youths from more than 60 countries are attending, said Sar Abdulaye, the consultation's coordinator, who is based in Geneva with the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

The purpose of the consultation, said Nadia Khouri-Dagher, a spokesperson, is "to provide a platform for young people's voices and concerns to be heard."

Khouri-Dagher is editor-in-chief of the newsletter of the two-year-old Population and Quality of Life Independent Commission. In 1995, the commission will make public a report which is expected to offer "a fresh vision of population issues."

In a briefing with journalists, Khouri-Dagher, who spoke in Arabic, French and English, emphasized the significance of the world's youth population. Almost half of the world's population is under age 25, one-third is between ages 12 and 24, and AIDS cases are expected to proliferate among persons aged 15 to 24, she said.

During the five days of the consultation, youth are also expected to discuss how population changes are affecting their lives, she explained.

Yesterday, Dr. Sadik told the young people that governments cannot do everything that should be done. People have to begin to assume responsibility, play a bigger role, she said.

Speaking about the Programme of Action, Dr. Sadik said that some people are saying the document has things in it that it doesn't have. People who have not read it, she said, are talking about it. She urged the youth to read the Programme of Action "carefully."



JEAN K. LEE / THE EARTH TIMES

Ghanian delegate at Youth Forum.

World Bank, donors, are bitterly criticized for 'insensitivity.'

It never says, for example, that abortion—legal under various circumstances in most countries of the world—should be used as a contraceptive. It does support safe abortions.

In his remarks, Dr. Mahran said that even if the conference closed today it has done 80 percent of its job. It has, he said, diffused "a tremendous amount" of information to the public.

The minister also felt that preparations for the conference and the attendant hubbub have "already sensitized governments and populations." Another Egyptian official, Abdelmeneem Emar, Minister of Youth and Sports, told the audience it was important to have an international conference with representatives of the North and South present because all problems were linked; poverty here, for example, meant migration to Europe. And world crises needed world solutions. International conferences must

design solutions, Emar said. When the youths had their chance to speak, they responded to a general discussion of population-related data by Lila Kowar, a representative of Egyptian non-governmental organizations. She gave the address in the first plenary session. Her audio-visual presentation covered such aspects as gross national products, the advantages and disadvantages of international migration, rural-to-urban migration, and the involvement of NGOs and the private sector, as well as governments, in international cooperation.

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Several youths who spoke, had harsh words for donor countries, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. These institutions were criticized for their alleged insensitivity toward the third world.

A woman from Norway, affiliated with the World Council of Churches, asked if the "economic system" wasn't keeping developing countries "down."

"We're just patching," she said of donor assistance. A woman from Botswana, however, had kind words for donors. "Donors give us the most support," she said. "Their government didn't send one youth to be here." She also criticized youths who head for college, turning away from agriculture. One woman from the US said "a lot of education needs to be done in Northern countries regarding overconsumption." Another, a Zimbabwean, said donors come into her country with their own labor force, "and their money is repatriated." A Ghanaian youth was most emphatic as he said donors were stealing his nation's resources, and sometimes returning the wealth with "strong strings attached." He also blamed "corrupt leaders" for his nation's difficulties.

The consultation was organized by nine international NGOs including the YWCA, International Planned Parenthood, World Council of Churches, International Federation of the Red Cross, World Organization of the Scout Movement, and the Society for International Development. The host is the Cairo International Scout Center.

VOICES, ASPIRATIONS, GOALS

From all over the world, they have gathered

BY JEAN K. LEE

The first day of the Youth Consultation on Population and Development at the Cairo Arab Scout Center on Wednesday marked the first significant event related to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Eighteen-year-old Shombi Oduetse Ellis of Botswana seemed to sum up the general sentiment when she said: "The voice of the youth must be heard to solve any kind of problems—because we are the new parents, the new migrants, and the new workers in the future. We are the ones who will make the choices tomorrow."

Bringing together more than 120 young people aged 15-24 from 60 countries, the goal of this "youth consultation" is to promote ideas and actions by youth on

population and development issues. As stressed by the leaders of the major organizers of this Conference, including the World Organization of Scout Movement, the Red Cross Youth, the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), one of the most important groups affected by population changes is the youth.

Among the many other young representatives of the youth consultation who remain determined and enthusiastic about the outcome of this Conference is Sen Shijulin, age 19, of India. He said, "In order to solve issues of development and family planning, we must first teach the uneducated about what is happening to our world, especially among the underdeveloped countries. This is the only way to bring the rest of the population

together, to pressure the government into action." The young representatives will meet daily and participate in activities such as working groups, facilitator training sessions and organization meetings of representatives.

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They will discuss various issues, including family planning, unemployment, migration, poverty, education and world health. The participants hope to secure many implementation strategies for these issues that their own countries can adopt. The Conference is scheduled to last until September 4.

Suzgo Kaira, age 25, of Zambia said, "I see this Conference as a unique opportunity to express the young people's ideas and concerns openly. Whether the rest of the Conference will have a



Entrance to Youth Forum.