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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL  
AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## **The European Community and the challenge of population growth: proposed position of the Community at the World Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994.**

The Cairo Conference takes place at a time when world demographic developments are characterised by ;

- an increase in total world population which, both in itself and as result of where it is concentrated, is leading to a substantial increase in population in the developing regions and above all in Africa ;
- a slow down in the growth rate of world population in a certain number of developing countries which is partly the result of the appropriate population policies;
- a continuing ageing of the population structure in the industrialised countries characterised by low fertility, and longer life expectancy, factors that nonetheless should combine to give a stable population structure in a few decades.

The various studies, discussions and recommendations of the International Institutions show clearly that :

- there seems to be a consensus about the need to reduce the rise in population so as to allow sustainable economic and social development and to avoid grave consequences for the world as a whole. Excessive growth constrains, indeed effectively blocks, development; when combined with extreme poverty it destroys the environment;
- there also seems to be a general consensus on the underlying justification for, and content of, population policies. There is no longer a debate about whether the reduction in demographic growth precedes or follows development; it is clear now that everyone feels that the two go hand in hand.

Now is the time to benefit from the opportunity presented by the Cairo conference to:

- reaffirm the principles on which population policies must be based;
- undertake to increase the funds available in the countries directly concerned, as well as those provided by donors, thus enabling these policies to be implemented.

This Conference represents a unique opportunity to reach a political consensus within the international community, and to develop a coherent plan of action aimed at tackling one of the major challenges of our time. Therefore, at the Development Council held on 2nd December 1993, the Member States and the Commission considered it best to develop a strategic approach and co-ordinate their initiatives regarding the International Conference on Population and Development.

Moreover it is useful to recall that the European Community is making a considerable effort to consolidate and use its knowledge of demographic matters to promote dialogue and co-ordination between the Member States of the Community and the developing countries.

It is in this context that the Commission has prepared this Communication.

## I. PRESENT DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND FORECASTS

The annual rate of growth of the world's population, which is currently about 5.4 billion people, changed from 1.8 percent at the start of the 1950s to 2.1 percent in 1965-70, to 1.7 percent observed today. In developing countries, which contain three quarters of the world's population, the rate of growth is 2.1 percent per annum against 0.5 percent in industrialised countries.

Demographic growth has therefore slowed in recent years. This is due to a fall in the fertility rate (to a level of 3.3 births per woman, against nearly 6 in the 1950s). This fall is very much due to the success of population policies followed in several countries, as well as to progress in education and standards of living.

However, despite falling growth rates a stock effect can still lead to ever larger annual increase in population. There are now 100 million more people each year, which is an unprecedented figure: in the space of 10 years, between 1991 and 2000, the world will gain 1 billion inhabitants, equivalent to the world's population at the start of the 19th century. Thirty years ago, the annual increase was only 70 million even though fertility rates were higher.

The fall in fertility applies neither to sub-Saharan Africa, where women still have 6.6 children on average and where the rate of demographic growth is still 3 percent, nor to the North African and Middle East region where it is almost 3 percent. In contrast, Latin America and Asia, with some exceptions that are mainly in southern Asia, have rates of around 2 percent which are set to fall in most cases because of the effects of development and associated demographic policies.

It is the policies on population and development followed over the next decade that will determine, when and at what level, the global population will stabilise. In this context, the three scenarios established by the United Nations from now to 2150 are well worth referring to:

Scenario	World population (billions)	
	2050	2150
High	12.5	28
Medium	11.5	12-13
Base	7.8	4.3 ?

## **II. RISKS OF EXCESSIVE DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH**

These are considerable and fall into three categories: risks to economic growth in developing countries, global risks, and risks of potentially destabilising migratory flows. Taking into account these risks, action must be taken quickly, with determination and with a commitment of the funds necessary to achieve the objective.

### *1. Risks to the sustainable development of developing countries*

#### *a) economic development*

The relationship between demographic growth and economic growth is still the subject of some controversy. Some people still believe that a growing population is beneficial, particularly in relation to the economies of scale arising from an expanding market. However, whilst moderate demographic growth could effectively favour development, it is clear that rapid rates of demographic growth are incompatible with sustainable rises in standards of living or with significant reductions in poverty in developing countries. The problem is not only the balance between population and food production: the needs for education, health and infrastructure exert pressure on resources which lead to reduced investment in production and consequently to lower income per capita.

The solution to the problem of development is therefore made easier by better control of population growth. In turn, development, together with more equitable wealth-distribution, allows the eradication of poverty and - by improving the status of women and promoting education and health - helps to reduce the birth rate.

#### *b) the local environment and sustainable development*

Demographic growth which runs out of control in developing countries can only aggravate environmental problems.

These problems are well-known: deforestation (even if the expansion of cultivated land at the expense of the forest is the result of property owning arrangements as well as the growing number of mouths to feed); desertification; difficulties in satisfying energy demand; soil erosion; the decline of arable land; the extinction of species of animals and plants, and the deteriorating quality of life in urban areas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that urban areas absorbed only 100 million people between 1815 and 1915. In contrast, the urban population in developing countries is set to grow by 1.5 billion between 1990 and 2010, aggravating social problems in large overpopulated cities: note that population density per square km is 88000 in Calcutta, 45000 in Manila and 29000 in Cairo, against 20000 in Paris, 13000 in Tokyo and 4000 in Brussels. In 2025 nearly two thirds of people in countries currently classified as developing countries will live in towns, some 50 of which will have more than 10 million inhabitants (35 million for Mexico city).

Furthermore, a population which is growing too rapidly risks an increase in poverty: thus, in developing countries, it is the poorest or least privileged that cause the most damage to the rural and urban environment while suffering the most.

### *c) human development*

Beyond the question of sustainable development, there is the question of human development. High fertility rates are largely confined to the least well-off sections of the population, aggravating inequality and poverty. Opportunities for women and children are limited in large impoverished families. A reduction in demographic growth, combined with more effective social policies, would enable the fundamental rights of individuals to be fully recognised.

## *2. Global risks*

Quite clearly it is not possible to determine, a priori, an absolute maximum for the world's population. After all, who would have supposed, two hundred years ago that the earth could support almost six billion people, thanks to the progress of technology, even if some 800 million of those people still suffer from famine or chronic malnutrition.

Modifications of the modes of production and consumption, for which the industrialised nations must take the initiative, can make it possible for the world to support a greater population. Such modifications should promote ways of producing and consuming which will satisfy the basic needs of humanity and the sustainability of a minimal standard of living.

Nonetheless taking into account the very real risk of a doubling of the world population in less than sixty years, and noting that ways of life do not change rapidly or radically it is not only prudent, but rather vital for the future of humanity, to make every effort possible to ensure that the world population stabilises, at a level as low as possible, as soon as possible.

## *3. De-stabilising migrations.*

The rapid increase in population inevitably has given rise to migratory pressures;

- migration from rural areas to cities,
- migrations between regions within a country and between developing countries,
- migration between the poorer regions towards the richer regions of the world,

The Commission in its Communication to the Council and the European Parliament of 23 February 1994 on immigration and asylum policy (COM(94)23) envisaged, within the framework of actions to be taken to deal with the deeper causes of the different types of migration, measures relating to demographic policy. This implies the need to take into account the demographic dimension, within the general framework of the development of a European immigration and asylum policy, when elaborating the Community's external policy.

Within the framework of a comprehensive approach on migration it is necessary to take action on migratory pressures. This includes taking action on those pressures caused by ;

- demographic growth which is too high to permit a sustainable growth of the economy, together with incomes and employment;
- inappropriate economic and social policies resulting in subsidising the cost of capital at the expense of the cost of labour;
- poverty and social injustice in rural and urban areas;
- wars, civil conflicts, non-respect of human rights and of the rights of minorities, which lead to an increase in the number of refugees.

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For these different reasons it is important to undertake actions directed towards reducing the growth of population, particularly in those regions in which it is excessive and so bring about the necessary demographic changes. Granted the desire of many couples to have fewer children, this objective is not only acceptable but may be realised, whilst fully respecting the rights of individuals, provided efforts in the domain of population policies are increased.

### **III. THE PRINCIPAL MEASURES TO BE INCLUDED IN POLICIES DIRECTED TOWARDS THE REDUCTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH.**

The decision to procreate constitutes a fundamental human right which may not be questioned. It follows consequently that population policies must be neither discriminatory (in respect of particular social or ethnic groups, for example) or coercive. They must assist men and women in their choices without imposing such choices on them.

The three essential elements of a population policy, in the larger sense, are:

- social policy, specifically in the domain of maternal and child health, education of girls, and the status of women, which will result in a reduction of desired births and an increase in the demand for family planning;
- providing information and creating an awareness amongst individuals and couples to the same end;
- increasing the availability of family planning by providing modern and safe contraceptive devices.

These three types of policies should complement each other and be concentrated on the needs of people. Their priority aim should be to improve the capacity of individuals and couples to exercise their right to choose.

#### *1. Social policies affecting desired fertility*

This reduction may be achieved in effect by

- educating and informing women and enhancing their social status: this latter aspect is fundamental in so far as the legal age of marriage, often too young, for girls, plays a major role in fertility and where a woman exercises a productive and remunerated role with fewer children,<sup>2</sup>

- the development of health services to reduce infant mortality,

- the fight against poverty (which implies in addition to access to employment for a greater number, the development of social services and the reduction of income inequalities).

## *2. Awareness and information*

As both men and women become more aware of their responsibilities so they are better placed to make a free choice of the number of children they may wish to have. In particular each couple must take into account the possibility that fewer children may enhance future prospects and by extension those of the community as a whole. A greater awareness of these issues combined with a population policy based on incentives, can further advance this process.

## *3. Availability of Reproductive Health Services*

Family planning services should form part of general Reproductive Health Services. Whilst these should be primarily directed towards limiting the number of unwanted births and ensuring the health of the mother and child, they should also be concerned with other issues such as controlling and preventing sexually transmitted diseases.

As regards Family Planning almost 20 percent of all unwanted births take place in under-developed countries, where, moreover, the number of abortions is high.

It is necessary to increase the supply of family planning services, to improve the quality of services provided, and to ensure their adequate distribution, by taking account in particular of the positive role that can be played by NGOs. That is the most direct means of reducing the increase of population and, at the same time, of reducing recourse to abortions. It is estimated that the impact of a family planning programme on a large scale, initiated now with a time horizon to the year 2100 would affect two billion persons at least. If fifty percent of all couples in the under-developed world had access to family planning services, some 300 millions, to whom such services are not at present available, would wish to benefit from them.

Apart from its global demographic objective, which is of general concern, family planning services have a social justification namely the enhancement of the well-being of families and individuals. For this double reason, such policies constitute a priority for the international community, developed countries and developing nations alike in the years to come.

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<sup>2</sup>The World Conference on the Rights of Man (Vienna, June 1993) provides under § 9 of Part II of the final document that "The human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equitable participation of women in the political, civil and cultural life, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community".

In this respect, the resolution of the Council of November 1992, concerning family planning in the context of the demographic policies of the less developed countries, has set out the following priorities:

- to enable men and women to freely exercise choice in relation to the number of children which they wish to have and the spacing of births,
- to contribute to the creation of an environment appropriate to the exercise of this fundamental right through better access to family planning services,
- to reduce significantly the health risks to women and children through the provision of adequate health services,
- to enable countries and local communities to face up to migratory movements and demographic growth and to influence those developments

Since the Conferences at Bucharest and Mexico, a stronger consensus has emerged for encouraging the developing countries, supported by the donor countries, to put population policies into effect. The Cairo Conference provides a unique opportunity to solemnly affirm this consensus and to translate this into reciprocal undertakings, by the various parties, that carry all the responsibility.

#### **IV. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND OF THE EXTERNAL DONORS.**

##### *1. The responsibilities of the developing countries.*

It is firstly in those countries where the rate of population growth is far too high that there is an immediate need to pursue policies to reduce it. These policies;

- must act on two fronts, that is via an increase and improvement in family planning and via a reduction in fertility resulting from better information and social policies;
- will be effective if the appropriate institutions, local populations and particularly women are closely associated;
- must allow, particularly in countries like China, for accompanying budgetary and social policies. Limiting fertility involves, all other things being equal, and after a number of decades, an ageing of the population, a development amplified by increased life expectancy. This leads to changes in social structure (fewer young people to support their parents) which have important implications for public finances (health systems, retirement pensions) which are already being faced by the industrialised countries, and which will soon affect countries such as China.
- require important financial resources. As of now the population programmes (strict sense) in place mobilise about 5 billion dollars a year of which 1 billion is external aid. For the year 2000 the estimates of needs vary between 8 and 12 billion of 1993 dollars. Whilst these are not massive figures, if expenditure on other types of population programmes considered in the wider sense is added ( health care for mothers and

children, education of women etc. ), then the developing countries must transfer a significant quantity of resources to these priorities from ideally less productive activities (such as military expenditure which amounts at the present time to between 100 billion and 150 billion dollars per year in the developing countries).

In addition it is important to take account, when implementing economic, social and environmental policies, of their impact on internal migration and the distribution of population. In particular a balanced development of rural and urban regions must be encouraged.

It is important to note also that greater respect for human rights and minorities, as well as the putting in place, or reinforcing of regional security arrangements, can facilitate, in certain specific cases where demographic expansion which results from political considerations, a slowdown in population growth. This will lead also to a reduction in migratory pressures.

## *2. The role of external donors.*

Donor governments should continue to assist developing countries with their own efforts on both the macro and the micro levels in order to ameliorate short term crises and avert long term deprivation which otherwise would lead to large migratory flows of a rural-urban and/or international nature.

Noting the needs of developing countries and the economic benefits that can flow from actions relating to population it is both indispensable and efficient for development, that external donors compliment internal financial efforts as regards both indirect actions (education, health) and direct actions in the domain of family planning. However these contributions cannot and must not be a substitute for internal efforts.

It would seem judicious in this regard for the international community to arrive at a consensus, at the Cairo Conference, to reserve 4 percent of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) for population policies, at the very latest, from the year 2000 onwards.

## **V. THE COMMITMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND ITS MEMBER STATES.**

The Community and the Member States must take as their starting point the priorities adopted in the Council Resolution of November 1992. In the first place it is necessary to put in place a quality dialogue with the developing countries with a view to defining strategies as regards population and family planning. Secondly the aid necessary for these countries to make these strategies operational must fit into the more general framework of providing basic health care, and the promotion of the health of the woman and child. These, together with education, are components of the whole as important as family planning for ensuring a reduction in the rate of population growth.

As regards financial resources the Commission notes that the Community and its Member States in 1991 only devoted 160 million ECU or 200 million dollars (approximately 0.6 percent of total ODA) to population policies as such. These are modest figures which nonetheless exhibit a rising trend: the percentage was only 0.4 percent at the beginning of the nineteen eighties.

For its part the Community itself has committed (for the period 1991 to 1993) a little less than 20 million ECU per year notably in South Asia and in the Mediterranean<sup>3)</sup>

In the run up to the year 2000 the Community and its Member states must devote a much greater part of its development assistance to population programmes.

The figure of 4 percent must be the overriding aim, a figure which corresponds to about 1 to 1.2 billion ECU on the basis of the hypothesis that, overall, total aid will be between 25 and 30 billion ECU in the year 2000. This amounts to a major challenge but one which is nonetheless manageable, provided future aid priorities are modified accordingly.

This commitment, of a political nature, only makes sense if the Member States also undertake to increase, within a consistent overall Community framework, the share of their ODA devoted to these policies.

This increase in resources must come as much from an increase in budgetary resources as from a redistribution of existing resources in favour of population actions. This increase must be accompanied by a firmer co-ordination, between the Community and the Member States, and with all the donors active in this particular domain.

The Commission is ready to assume its responsibilities in this matter. In particular the Commission proposes to increase substantially aid in favour of population policies. Thus the Commission is setting the objective of committing at least 300 million ECU by the year 2000 (see Annex).

In parallel it is equally indispensable that financial co-operation should be increased and directed towards :

- improving the status of woman by education, independently of any policy for reducing fertility ;
- a general improvement in the supply of health services, in particular as regards the health of the mother and child and as regards the fight against sexually transmitted diseases ;
- protection of the environment and the rational use of resources
- the management of migratory flows by collaboration between countries of origin and countries of settlement, and by a policy aimed at ensuring the integration of legal immigrants into the European Community ;

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<sup>3)</sup> under

- budget lines B7-5050 Aid for population policies and programmes in developing countries), B7-5047 (Maternal and child care), B7-5010 (Community contribution towards schemes concerning developing countries carried out by non-governmental organisations) B7-3000 (Financial and technical co-operation with Asian developing countries), B7-4080 (Multilateral, regional, and subregional cooperation in the Mediterranean), B-5055 (Migration observatory and positive measures for immigration) ;
- and in 1993, under LOME IV

- improving our knowledge of what is happening and in particular of the links between population, development and the environment.

In effect progress in these domains is as important as family planning for ensuring a slowdown in demographic growth.

The Commission stresses that the increases proposed must respect the existing financial guidelines, by redirecting aid priorities.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The Cairo Conference is taking place at a key moment. It is now, at the end of the twentieth century, that action must be taken to avoid an uncontrollable demographic explosion, which will threaten development in many countries and regions and which will provoke large and potentially destabilising migratory movements. In addition such developments point to the emergence of unresolvable environmental problems both local and global. Progress has already taken place: demographic growth rates have fallen for 20 years. This is often a result of population policies and indeed the conditions for the success of such policies can now be discerned. It is necessary to build on this progress and to undertake or reinforce such policies in particular by benefiting from the climate of consensus which now exists in most countries and within the international community.

To these policies, which must be neither coercive nor discriminatory but adapted to the diverse situations and cultural traditions that exist, all those concerned and involved can and must contribute. Whilst responsibility in the first instance for the conception and implementation of population policies lies with the developing countries themselves the industrialised countries have an important role to play in contributing, in particular, technical support and the indispensable extra finance.

The European Community must work for the success of the Conference which must lead to an ambitious programme of action for the next decade. The Community must be ready to make actual specific commitments in quantity terms with a view to increasing substantially financial support to population programmes in developing countries.

## ANNEX

This ECU 300 million will be financed half from the EDF and half from the budget. The share from the budget will be financed under the headings currently used (which were referred to in footnote <sup>3</sup>), plus headings B7-405 (financial protocols with the southern Mediterranean countries) and B7-3010 (financial and technical cooperation with the Latin American developing countries). Budgetary expenditure under these various headings is likely to follow the following pattern:

1995:	ECU 50 million
1996:	ECU 70 million
1997:	ECU 90 million
1998:	ECU 110 million
1999:	ECU 130 million
2000:	ECU 150 million

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# DOCUMENTS

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