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POPULATION POLICY AND TRENDS IN AFRICA

Statement to a Press Conference on Population

by

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**Your Excellencies,
Members of the Press,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues,**

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to Africa Hall today. This Press Conference is one in a series of public discussion and awareness forums that ECA intends to organize on its activities and initiatives. The focus of today's forum is on population policy and trends in Africa. The purpose of today's forum is two fold: to inform on Africa's preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in September 1994 and to launch the African Population Profile 1994.

Preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development

For a very long time, population policy was viewed narrowly in terms of birth control, mortality and morbidity rate and maternal care. As awareness has grown about the complex links between population and socio-economic development, public policies have evolved to incorporate population dimensions in socio-economic planning and management. Previous international conferences on population have played an important role in creating and sustaining this awareness.

In parallel with the efforts at the international level, African countries have held three major conferences in the past twenty five years to ponder population issues. These were the First African Population Conference held in Accra, Ghana 1971; the Second African Population Conference in Arusha, Tanzania 1984; and the Third African Population Conference in Dakar, Senegal 1992.

The Arusha Conference was a significant milestone in the evolution of population policies in African countries. For at that

Conference, African countries adopted the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action (KPA) for African Population and Self-reliant Development. The KPA proclaimed the principles and objectives of Africa's population policy. It affirmed that population should be considered as a central issue in development strategies and plans and that the right and responsibilities of every country to tackle its population problems should be recognized. It also defined the improvement of the quality of life in the region and achievement of population growth rate that are compatible with the desired economic growth and social development goals, as major objectives.

The Dakar Conference represented a follow-up to the Arusha Conference and Africa's preparatory meeting for the International Conference in Cairo. As a follow-up to the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action it reviewed the efforts made and constraints experienced by member States in the implementation of the KPA. In this regard it reviewed some of the major problems since the adoption of KPA, including the deterioration in public health, continuing high fertility, questions relating to environmental damage, AIDS, and poverty.

The Dakar Conference adopted the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development. The Declaration is both the African common position to be submitted to the International Conference on Population and Development and the reference framework for population policies in Africa. The Dakar/Ngor Declaration contains a number of principles and sets many quantitative targets. Five main principles are articulated in the Dakar/Ngor Declaration as follows:

- (i) The Kilimanjaro Programme of Action (KPA) remains the framework for the implementation of development policies in Africa;

- (ii) The success of any population policy requires the institution of a stable political and social environment;
- (iii) Family planning strategies should form an integral part of population policies;
- (iv) The rights of women, particularly in the areas of education, employment and health should be explicit in all national development programmes;
- (v) The integration of population variables in socio-economic planning depends on training and research in population and development.

The Declaration also established a number of quantitative objectives as follows:

- (i) Reducing the region's growth rate to 2.5 per cent by the year 2000 and to 2 per cent by the year 2010;
- (ii) Doubling the regional contraceptive prevalence rate from about 10 per cent to about 20 per cent by the 2000 and 40 per cent the year 2010 since the reduction of population growth can not be achieved without the use of contraceptives.
- (iii) Raising the life expectancy at birth region-wide to 55 years;
- (iv) Achieving an infant mortality rate of less than 50 per thousand live births and a childhood mortality rate of 70 or less per thousand by the year 2000.
- (v) Halving the maternal mortality rate by the year 2000. The reduction of maternal mortality would be achieved more specifically by reducing the number of unsafe

abortions. For that to happen, quality family planning services accessible to all should be established.

Following the Dakar Conference a committee was established to follow up the implementation of the Declaration. The terms of reference of the Committee are to:

- (i) Impress upon African Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the need to initiate and coordinate activities and programmes aimed at implementing the recommendations contained in the Declaration;
- (ii) Encourage all member States to set up national focal points to follow-up and assess the implementation of the Declaration;
- (iii) To maintain contact with focal points in each member country so as to monitor the implementation of the Declaration;
- (iv) To collect relevant data on the implementation of the Declaration by member countries, United Nations bodies, donor agencies, IGOs and NGOs.

ECA will serve as the secretariat of the follow-up Committee and the Working Group. The first meeting of the Follow-up Committee will take place in Addis Ababa on a date to be set in consultation with the parties concerned. That first meeting of the Follow-up Committee will focus on working out a strategy for the mobilization of resources to implement the KPA and the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and preparations for the Cairo Conference.

African Population Profile

The present edition of the African Population Profile is the Third in the series of this publication. The two previous editions of this publication were issued in 1984 and 1989 respectively and enjoyed a wide African and international readership. The African Population Profile is the main vehicle through which the Economic Commission for Africa monitors trends and policies on population in Africa. The publication of the current issue has been made possible by the combined assistance received from the Futures Group and the Population Reference Bureau of the United States of America as well as United States Agency for International Development (USAID). I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to them for their support.

This edition of Africa Population Profile contains information on three main issues: Demographic Characteristics, Socio-economic Characteristics and Population Policies.

The publication shows that the total population of ECA member States as at mid 1991 was 622 million. It also shows that at an estimated annual growth rate of growth of 2.9% for the period 1990-1995, the population of Africa is expected to double in 24 years. The majority of countries (33) will take 20-24 years to double their population. About three countries will take less than 20 years to double their population, while 15 countries will take more than 25 years to do so.

While the growth rates of population in Africa tend to show some declines over the years, the nonetheless remain persistently high thereby sustaining the high rate of population growth. The publication shows further that rates are projected to show a slight decline by around the year 2000. Population dependency ratio -- defined as the number of people under 14 and over 65 years old --

is highest in Africa of all the major regions of the world. Africa's dependency ratio stands at 92% compared to 68% in Latin America, 61% in Asia, 51% in North America and 50% in Europe.

The proportion of married women currently using contraceptives, i.e. contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) remains very low in most African countries. During 1985-1989, 28 countries had CPRs of less than 10%, while in 9 countries CPRs were between 10-40%. Only in 3 countries have CPRs been more than 40%.

Africa is in the process of rapid urbanization. The percentage of population living in urban areas, which was only 23 per cent in 1970, has gone up to about 34 per cent by 1990 and is projected to reach 41 per cent by the year 2000. Between 1985-90, the average annual rate of change of the percentage living in urban areas of Africa as a whole has been about 2 per cent. A significant proportion of Africa's urban population is concentrated in large agglomerations. In 1970, there were only two African cities with population of 2 million and more. The number of cities quadrupled to 8 in 1990. Cairo is the most populous city with 9 million people in 1990, followed by Lagos with 7.7 million people in 1990.

Most socio-economic indicators still show large gaps between males and females. In terms of literacy, although considerable improvements have been made over the years, the gap in many African countries is still wide. However, it is more marked in certain countries than in others. For instance, female literacy as per cent of male in selected countries, ranges from less than 38 per cent (Sudan, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and Guinea) to more than 73 per cent (Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Kenya, and Ghana). Primary School enrolment ratios in 20 selected countries indicate that 13 of them have shown improvements, while the rest recorded a fall. However, there have been notable variations among the countries.

The lowest ratio was recorded in Guinea (28), while the highest was in Botswana 120).

The picture that emerges from this review of population trends in Africa is one of very slow but encouraging progress. These trends need to be fostered and sustained. And I hope that the activities that member States as well as Regional Organizations and International Agencies have embarked upon in the context of the International Conference on Population and Development will contribute immensely to that progress.

Thank you.