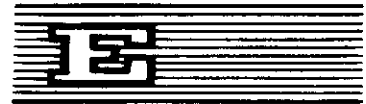


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SUMMARY REVIEW OF POPULATION ISSUES ARISING FROM
UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS OTHER THAN THE THIRD SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN DEMOGRAPHERS

BY

POPULATION DIVISION
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
ADDIS ABABA

A. Introduction

This document contains a summary of important discussions held and decisions taken on population and economic and social development at the Conference of Ministers held in Rabat from 20 to 28 March 1979 and at the 20th Session of the United Nations Population Commission, held in New York, from 29 January to 9 February 1979. In other words, the report refers to developments since the last Conference of African Demographers.

I. Matters arising from the 14th Session of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Fourteenth Session of the Commission among other items considered the programme of work and the activities of the secretariat in population matters. It endorsed also the report of the Third Session of the Conference of African Demographers, held in Dakar from 19-24 February, 1979. It adopted a strategy for the African Region within the framework of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade 1/, and pertinent resolutions related to population matters, training, and role of women in development.

The Commission took fully into account population variables in the strategies adopted for Africa. In the Plan of Action, it took account of the high rate of population growth in many African countries, the rapid rate of uncontrolled urbanization, the high levels of mortality and fertility, the existing gap in meeting the needs of large groups of people for health, education, shelter, food, employment, etc., the imbalance in opportunities for the development and application of latest capabilities in the population of women and the young. 2/

The Commission adopted a resolution on priority population programmes 3/ which stressed the need to "give high priority to studies on interrelation between population growth and economic and social development" and requested the Executive Secretary "to initiate a programme of assistance to the countries . . . in establishing special units to deal with the integration of population variables in development plans". The

1/ ECA, Report of the 14th Session of the Commission (5th Meeting of the Conference of Ministers) and Commemoration of the 21st anniversary of the Commission (Rabat, 20-28 March 1979). E/CN.14/724) Resolution 332(XIV), Annex A. Section II.

2/ Ibid. E/CN.14/724, page 87

3/ ECA, Ibid., Resolution 366(XIV)

resolution also called for the expansion and improvement of "the activities of the secretariat in the field of population information and documentation in order to give better service, including training in this field to the countries of the region". It further invited the Executive Secretary "to accelerate the programme of assistance to the countries" and to give priority to population dynamics, analysis of censuses, studies on mortality, the relationship between infant and childhood mortality, levels and patterns of fertility and their future prospects, the relationship between population distribution and socio-economic development, and the integration of population policies and programmes in development planning.

Another resolution 1/ on training in population studies in Africa called for action to speed up the process of decentralization of both Institut de Formation et de Recherche Démographiques (IFORD) and Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) and to negotiate with the Governments concerned in order to make the institutes fully regional. The resolution also called for consultations for assisting the Portuguese-speaking countries in their training needs.

II. Questions arising out of the Twentieth Session of the Population Commission

The Twentieth Session of the Population Commission was held in New York from 29 January to 9 February 1979. The following seven African members of the Commission attended the session: Egypt, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zaire. The Commission focussed its debate on two main topics, i.e., review and appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action and the monitoring of population trends and policies.

In its review, the Commission considered the steps to be taken to "ensure due recognition of the principles, objectives and recommendations of the Plan of Action and full and complete integration of population in the formulation of a new international development strategy, in the establishment of a New International Economic order and in the development and the revision of any other relevant international instrument". 2/ The Commission made recommendations "for action to be taken in order to better

1/ ECA, Ibid., Resolution 367(XIV)

2/ United Nations, Population Newsletter, No. 27, April 1979. p. 6

adopt the plan to changing conditions and to make it more effective guide for population activities in the years ahead". ^{1/}

The discussion on the monitoring of population trends and policies gave indications on the situation and recent changes in levels, trends and policies concerning population growth, fertility, mortality, international migration, some aspects of population structure, urbanization and population distribution. Some findings which ought to be highlighted include:

- (a) Mortality decline in developing countries has been limited by the levels of social and economic development which explains the differentials between rural and urban areas;
- (b) There appeared to be a deceleration in the rate of growth in both developing regions;
- (c) Fertility variations seemed to be dependent on a complex network of variables, income being no longer a satisfactory indicator;
- (d) An increasing concern with respect to levels of internal migration was expressed;
- (e) The majority opinion among governments indicated that the rate of population growth was seen to be important to development.

The Population Commission submitted two draft resolutions to the Economic and Social Council, one on the strengthening of actions for the fulfilment of the World Population Plan of Action and the other on the work programme. Some relevant extracts of the two resolutions are given below.

Strengthening of actions concerned with the fulfilment of the World Population Plan of Action

This resolution emphasized that:

- (a) The Economic and Social Council urged all Member States and regional and international bodies, both governmental and non-governmental, to develop and strengthen further activities to implement the World Population Plan of Action and to take account of the recommendations for priority areas for action;
- (b) Technical assistance activities in the field of population should

^{1/} Ibid.

be increased, particularly in the light of the recommendations for priority areas for action as identified in the first review and appraisal of the Plan of Action;

(c) There was the need for the international development strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade and other international instruments for economic, social and technological progress to recognize fully the interrelationships of population factors to social, economic, cultural and political development, and also the need for action to deal with population problems;

(d) Consideration should be given to the possibility of holding an international conference to review population development in the first decade since the World Population Conference;

(e) The United Nations bodies should continue with the process of monitoring, review and appraisal of progress made towards implementing the World Population Plan of Action.

Work Programme in the field of Population

Under this resolution, the United Nations bodies were urged to:

- (a) Continue and strengthen work on population trends and structure;
- (b) Continue to provide reliable and up-to-date demographic estimates and projections;
- (c) Continue studies on fertility change;
- (d) Intensify work on interrelations of population and development;
- (e) Prepare a manual for the use of national planners on methods of incorporating demographic factors in development planning;
- (f) Analyze population policies and their implications;
- (g) Arrange for timely publication of population studies and projections;
- (h) Facilitate the establishment of a Population Information Network;
- (i) Continue the biennial monitoring of population trends and policies and the quinquennial review and appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action;
- (j) Expand the United Nations programme of technical co-operation in the field of population;

(k) Strengthen the United Nations programme of training in population; and

(l) Assist Governments, at their request, in establishing or strengthening national institutions to co-ordinate population activities, particularly those relating to development planning.