



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on Population and Development**

#### **Forty-first session**

7-11 April 2008

Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

#### **Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development**

### **Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* E/CN.9/2008/1.



## **Statement**

We, young people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds, affirm that each person has inherent dignity. Recognition of this dignity is the basis for authentic development. Each person lives in community and therefore has the responsibility to contribute to society through the gift of self. We believe that the members of society contribute to or hinder development through their choices.

Authentic development is a process that takes place at all levels of society, creating a social, political, and economic environment that allows persons to reach their full physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional potential.

Basic necessities such as access to clean water, sanitation, and adequate healthcare promote a healthy population, which is essential to development. Responsible stewardship of natural resources allows a population to develop without compromising its well-being.

We believe that education is a foundational element of development. The goal of education must be to help people recognize their dignity and equip them with the necessary tools to exercise their potential. When every member of a population is aware of how their education contributes to development, they will be able to fulfill their responsibility in society.

The creativity of the human person is earth's greatest resource and a catalyst for development. Human creativity generates new ideas and alternatives for development. We assert that, although the human person's creative capacity is unlimited, it should never be implemented in ways that compromise the inherent dignity of every human person.

Each society has its own demographic structure with specific implications for development within that society. It is necessary for individuals, society, governments, and institutions to work in solidarity to foster the adequate conditions such as freedom, peace, and security that lead to development. It is not the density or composition of a population that determines the degree of development. A population which utilizes its creativity can overcome obstacles to development, including a lack of natural resources.

We invite persons at all levels of society to use their creativity, skills, and resources to provide opportunities and the necessary environment for authentic development.

## **Themes of the forty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development**

We commend the international community for its continued efforts to improve the quality of life of persons around the world through the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development. The solidarity of the international community in this effort is essential to its success. Relating to the particular theme of this year's session, Population Distribution, Urbanization and Internal Migration, the World Youth Alliance would like to place a particular emphasis on capacity-building. Development is driven by people; people committed to the betterment of themselves, their family, community and country. Therefore, investments in human capital through education, health

care and security and in social capital through support of good governance and subsidiarity are crucial for successful development.

### *Urban Population*

As stated in the documents for the forty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development, increasing urbanization, particularly in less developed countries, poses unique challenges to municipalities, national governments and international development organizations. Creativity is required to develop policies that overcome these challenges and address the poverty and lack of opportunity that drive people from rural areas. In particular, the input and direction of migrants themselves is required since they best know their needs and the culturally appropriate responses. Governments and international programs directed at poverty alleviation in the urban and rural settings and the provision of basic services to new urban communities could benefit greatly from such partnerships with civil society. These partnerships are an important part of capacity-building and thus civic engagement and sustainable development.

### *Population Distribution and the Environment*

The natural environment is greatly affected by urbanization and current world trends in internal migration. The large concentrations of air pollutants as well as solid wastes and wastewater produced in large cities have the potential to overwhelm the local natural environment. Management of these pollutants and protection of the natural environment is essential to protecting human dignity and to creating conditions for authentic development.

The World Youth Alliance encourages the international community to foster responsible stewardship of the natural environment as it manages changing population distributions. Each member of society must recognize his or her personal responsibility to be an effective steward of the natural environment that all of us share. Responsible stewardship is the personal commitment to care for both earth and neighbor. This commitment will build the capacity of communities to effectively manage and develop resources.

We place great value on our natural environment as a source of both physical sustenance and immeasurable beauty to be cared for with wisdom and temperance. Responsible stewardship recognizes the moral necessity of forming sound policy in order to preserve and enhance the riches of the natural world for future generations.

### *Development and Population*

Changing age structures within the context of development are an important consideration in examining impacts of urbanization. The United Nations Population Division points out that aging is more rapid in urban areas due to lower fertility. At the same time, old-age dependency ratios have been reduced through the migration of relatively young people to urban centers. Over the long term however, these ratios will increase, given the international community's consistent efforts to reduce fertility, particularly in less developed countries where urbanization is occurring more rapidly.

In developing countries currently experiencing accelerated population aging and rapid urbanization, dependency ratios will increase significantly in a short time. Social wealth may not be sufficient to adequately support people who retire. Women in particular will be disproportionately affected by lack of social resources to manage increased old-age dependency ratios, given their greater number among persons over sixty years.

We encourage the Commission and the international community to reconsider their approach to the issue of population in light of emerging data, by focusing on capacity-building.

### **Capacity-Building**

The World Youth Alliance is convinced that through creativity, innovation and hard work, people can overcome the current development challenges posed by rapid urbanization. Poverty, environmental degradation and increasing dependency ratios are not inevitable. Development programs that build human capacity will allow people to reach their individual potentials and to contribute their abilities to their communities and societies.

The World Youth Alliance encourages the international community to continually strive to ensure that aid is well directed; we propose that the best investment is in human capacity-building to bring about a just and sustainable society.

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