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UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

Suggestions and recommendations on the
future role and functions of UNFPA

Summary

Several intergovernmental conferences and meetings which have taken place during 1982-1984, in the context of preparations for the International Conference on Population - 1984, have adopted suggestions and recommendations concerning UNFPA. The Preparatory Committee for the Conference, at its resumed session in March 1984, also proposed a specific recommendation concerning UNFPA. This paper provides the text of all the suggestions and recommendations that are pertinent to the future role and functions of UNFPA.

1. The five intergovernmental conferences on population that have been organized by the United Nations regional commissions during 1982-1984 to review the developments in the population field since Bucharest in their respective regions and to prepare for the International Conference on Population at the regional level, have all adopted recommendations which are pertinent to the future role and functions of UNFPA.
2. The Asia-Pacific Call for Action on Population and Development adopted by the Third Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held at Colombo, Sri Lanka, 20-29 September 1982, after recognizing the "invaluable" contribution of UNFPA in inter alia "providing both financial and technical support for population programmes in the Asian and Pacific regions" (Preamble), urges United Nations organizations and the specialized agencies "to enhance their financial and technical support to Governments desiring such support in order to implement national population and development programmes" (recommendation 53), and also urges donor countries "to continue and increase, in real terms, their support for population programmes, through multilateral organizations such as UNFPA and through non-governmental organizations" (recommendation 54);
3. The report of the regional meeting on population organized by the Economic Commission for Europe, held at Sofia, Bulgaria, 6-12 October 1983, includes the following among its suggestions and recommendations: "The rate of population growth in many developing countries is still very high and continues to be an important obstacle to the improvement of the quality of life and to the achievement of the goals of economic and social development. Accordingly, members of the ECE region, sharing the concerns expressed in resolutions of several recent meetings of international bodies and in the Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, are urged to maintain and wherever possible to increase, in real terms, the value of the different forms of their assistance in the field of population. The programmes of the UNFPA, as well as those of other governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field of population, merit strong continued support" (paragraph 66);
4. The Kilimanjaro Programme of Action for African Population and Self-Reliant Development, resulting from the Second African Population Conference held at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 9-13 January 1984, includes five recommendations concerning UNFPA.

"Organizations of the United Nations system, especially UNFPA which plays an important role in supporting population programmes in Africa, as well as other international, regional and subregional organizations concerned with population questions are urged to assist governments at their request in the implementation of this African Programme of Action." (paragraph 85);

"The Conference urges that the responsibilities of UNFPA regarding promotion, implementation and co-ordination of population programmes be strengthened further, so as to ensure a more effective and efficient delivery of population assistance to Africa." (paragraph 86);

"The ECA (Economic Commission for Africa) secretariat, UNFPA and other United Nations agencies are called upon to continue the programme of assisting African Governments in the population data collection, processing and analysis. They should also provide assistance to Member States in the formulation of population policies and programmes, population information activities and the integration of population variables in development as outlined in this Programme of Action." (paragraph 87);

"The ECA Secretariat and UNFPA should expand their services of middle-level training to African countries especially where demographic expertise is particularly lacking" (paragraph 88);

"Governments and donor agencies are urged to provide more resources to UNFPA to enable it to provide increased support to national governments and to organizations of the United Nations system working in the field of population in Africa." (paragraph 90);

5. The Amman Declaration on Population and Development in the Arab World adopted by the regional population conference organized by the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) and the League of Arab States, held at Amman, Jordan, 25-29 March 1984, includes two recommendations on UNFPA:

"Support should be given to the important role played by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities within the United Nations system in order to enable it to effectively discharge its task of providing assistance in the broad field of population policies, programmes and projects. In the light of the needs resulting from the manifold nature of the dimensions, development requirements and causes of the population question, there is an imperative need to expand the functions and responsibilities of UNFPA to enable it to meet the increasing number of requests from Governments and organizations for assistance in their population policies and programmes and in furthering the level of awareness and understanding of population issues in their development context. Accordingly, the United Nations is called upon to take appropriate measures and early follow-up action to this end. States Members of the United Nations are invited to contribute financially to UNFPA in a manner commensurate with the increasing needs of population projects." (paragraph 55); and

"(a) To co-operate further with the Economic Commission for Western Asia and the Secretariat of the League of Arab States in support of their ongoing endeavours to implement regional programmes and projects in the field of population activities; (b) To expand and develop programmes of technical co-operation with the Arab countries especially with the least developed among them, in order to help them to tackle their population problems, control the causes of those problems and implement their programmes and projects in this respect." (paragraph 56).

6. The twentieth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), held at Lima, Peru, 29 March - 6 April 1984, which considered the report of the Meeting of High-Level Experts on population held in Havana, Cuba in December 1983, adopted the following resolution concerning UNFPA:

"Bearing in mind the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population, 1984, regarding the further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action, and especially recommendation 80,

"Reiterating the need to strengthen the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) so that it can give more effective financial and technical assistance to the countries of the region,

"1. Recognizes the very important collaboration given by UNFPA in support of the efforts of the countries of the region in the field of population;

"2. Urges governments and donor agencies, in view of the fact that the demand for greater financial assistance in the field of population exceeds the existing resources of UNFPA, to increase their contributions to the Fund so that it can respond more adequately to the growing assistance needs of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean;

"3. Requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to give this recommendation prompt and fitting consideration."

7. The recommendations adopted by the recent conferences or meetings had been endorsed at the annual sessions of the respective regional economic commissions in 1984. In addition, the Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Awareness Conference on Population and Development, which was held in Saint Lucia under the aegis of the Caribbean Community, from 30 April to 2 May 1984, adopted a resolution which refers both to the International Conference on Population (ICP) and UNFPA. The Conference adopted several resolutions as follows:

"1. Urges developed countries and the donor community at large, in the light of the fact that the demand for assistance in the field of population exceeds UNFPA's resources, to increase their contributions to the Fund, thus strengthening its institutional capacity to respond more adequately to the growing assistance needs of the countries of the region.

"2. Recommends that the Caribbean countries, although being an integral and harmonious component of the ECLAC system, should be considered as a special and distinct sub-regional unit within the Latin American and Caribbean region with separate needs, deserving a larger and

more equitable proportion of available resources provided by UNFPA and other funding agencies.

"3. Recommends that the technical, demographic and economic criteria be re-examined in order to generate a more flexible priority system which will ensure that a larger and more equitable proportion of existing resources be made available for population assistance to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region.

"4. Recommends that the International Conference on Population, to be held in Mexico City in August 1984, as well as related subsequent meetings of the United Nations, give due consideration to the necessity to take such steps as may be necessary to remove whatever obstacles including those relating to the existing co-ordination and policy-making responsibilities and functions which may impede the UNFPA in responding fully to the need for improving existing methods of programme implementation, with a view to achieving a more efficient delivery of population assistance.

"5. Requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to give these recommendations, and other related statements emanating from appropriate United Nations bodies, prompt and fitting consideration during 1985."

8. From the international perspective, it is important to note recommendation 80 adopted by the Preparatory Committee for ICP at its resumed session (New York, 12-17 March 1984), which states: "In view of the leading role of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities on population matters, the Conference urges that the Fund should be strengthened further so as to ensure the more effective delivery of population assistance, taking into account the growing needs in this field. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is invited to examine this recommendation" (E/1984/28/Add.1).

9. The following major points emerge from an analysis of these recommendations:

(a) the need for increasing population assistance to be provided through UNFPA to developing countries;

(b) the need for UNFPA to work closely with regional economic commissions and other relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system in supporting population policies and programmes at the national level;

(c) the need to increase the awareness and understanding of population questions in the over-all context of development; and,

(d) the need to strengthen UNFPA so that it could fulfill these functions and responsibilities more effectively in the future.

10. A review of the actions taken by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Governing Council over the past 12 years would show that such actions were undertaken in response to the continuing evolution of the role,

functions and responsibilities of UNFPA. In the context of the responsibilities that UNFPA may be called upon to undertake in further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action, it may be necessary to redefine and clarify:

- (a) the objectives of UNFPA;
- (b) the mandate of UNFPA in building up awareness and understanding of population issues;
- (c) the principles governing allocation of assistance by UNFPA; and,
- (d) the relevance of UNFPA structure both at the headquarters and in the field to the emerging needs in the population field.