



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique
Federación mundial de las asociaciones de salud pública

Population and Ecological Sustainability

Passed by the WFPHA General Assembly - 1994

The World Federation of Public Health Associations,

Noting that the United Nation's 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD '94) will consider the issue of population and development within the context of international actions on sustainable economic growth and sustainable development arising out of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) and its Agenda 21;

Noting further that the World Health Organization's Health and Environment Strategy 1993 recognizes that rapid population growth and increasing poverty are critical factors impinging on the achievement of WHO's global goals, which include "the attainment of lifestyles and patterns of consumption consistent with ecological sustainability;"

Aware that the vast majority of human societies in the world have been and still are unable to provide all of their citizens with clean water, sanitation facilities, food, housing, employment, and education adequate to maintaining good health; and that even so, the estimated human population on this planet grew from 4.851 billion to 5.292 billion, or by about 9%, between 1985 and 1990; and that the existing demographic momentum makes almost certain that world population will reach 9-10 billion by 2050;

Mindful that population pressures -- which contribute to violence and destabilization of social structures, deforestation, desertification, soil degradation, and loss of arable land -- and are ultimately related to inequities of income, education, health, and other social resources within and between countries; and that these inequities have grown worse in the decade of the 1980s and have contributed to a continuing outflow of financial resources from developing countries to industrialized countries between 1985 and 1989 and to a massive increase in international migration;

Emphasizing that the relationship between education (in particular, female literacy) and lower fertility is close and well documented;

Noting that empirical research shows that environmental degradation is a function of the rate of change of per capita consumption of resources and of technology (especially environmental impacts resulting from land use, energy intensity, and waste emissions) as well as of population;



Emphasizing that action is required simultaneously at many levels: at the international level it should encompass a reorganization of international trade, aid, and production policies to break the cycle of indebtedness, poverty, and high population growth in the poorest countries; at the national level in rich countries concerted action by all sectors of the population is needed to reduce their ecologically unsustainable and inequitable demands on global resources;

Recognizing that nations should be encouraged to develop population policies that take into account effects of trade, aid, industry, technology, regional development, employment, education, primary health care, family planning, and fertility;

Aware that public health practice is based on applying knowledge generated through multidisciplinary sciences and practical skills, so as to encourage changing social practices that harm health, and is thus well placed to contribute a range of strategies to address the multi-factorial causes of the world's current environmental problems;

1. AFFIRMS that the difficult questions of limiting human population size and alleviating global poverty require concerted action and solidarity among people and their governments and nongovernmental organizations in all rich and poor countries;
2. ENCOURAGES WFPHA Member Associations to develop activities in their countries that lead to acceptance of sustainable development by their populations and governments;
3. REQUESTS the WFPHA to bring this resolution to the attention of WHO Member States, urging them to develop policies that consider the implications for ecological sustainability of personal and collective decisions on family size as well as energy consumption;
4. ENCOURAGES WHO Member States to develop integrated national population policies aimed at reducing levels of resource consumption, waste production, environmentally damaging technology, and population growth; such policies should include the development of guidelines encompassing industry, technology, employment, education (particularly for women), child care, family planning, and foreign aid and trade;
5. URGES WHO Member States to implement the resolution in Agenda 21 calling for an assessment of "national population carrying capacity;"
6. DECIDES to actively participate as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) to the ICPD'94.