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Emerging Social Issues Division

Social Policy and Population Section

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Article **The Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference:
Towards a Repositioning of Population in the Global
Development Agenda?**

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Abstract Since the Bali Conference 10 years earlier, by the time of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference at Bangkok in December 2002, the Asian and Pacific region had become more diverse demographically, though with a clear shift towards lower fertility and mortality levels. Economically, the region had grown impressively, albeit with considerable variation. In Bangkok, there was less sense of the urgency of lowering fertility rates, and indeed in some countries the issue had become one of needing to raise these rates. These countries and areas held firm to the reproductive health emphases of the Cairo Programme of Action, despite the concerns of the United States of America delegation that the language of the Programme of Action tended to promote abortion and adolescent sexual activity. The Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted by consensus at the conclusion of the Conference is a carefully worded document, reflecting current consensus about principles and broad directions for action in the areas of population and development. Though the population issue as conventionally understood no longer appears an urgent concern, there is a need to recognize that population and development issues are just as important for countries with low fertility as they are for countries with high fertility. Moreover, there are important population dimensions of the issues that are currently given the greatest prominence, including poverty and environmental sustainability.

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