

Evolution of Population Concerns: Reflections from the Asian and Pacific Population Conferences

It is imperative that the population community sustain its efforts to keep the population perspective in the forefront of issues such as globalization, environment and sustainable development

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The United Nations Seminar on Population in Asia and the Far East, held at Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, focused attention on increasing population trends within the region covered by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE). The Seminar realized that the current rising population growth rates largely negated or probably even retarded the effects of national socio-economic

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programmes that provided an environment conducive to lowering birth rates. Interest in the region's population gains was further stimulated by the establishment of the Demographic Training and Research Centre at Bombay, India, jointly operated by the United Nations and the Government of India. At the Centre's inaugural conference it was suggested that the United Nations convene a regional conference on population. That proposal was taken up by the Commission in its resolution 28 (XV) of 13 March 1959 requesting the secretariat to organize an Asian population conference where experts could examine the major problems of planning for economic and social development arising from current and prospective trends in population growth, composition and geographic distribution. Consequently, in 1963, the First Asian Population Conference (APC) was held at New Delhi, with the Government of India providing host facilities. APC was established as a statutory organ of the Commission to be convened every 10 years to consider all aspects of population questions and, of their impact on economic and social development as mandated in Commission resolution 74 (XXIII) of 17 April 1967.

The Second APC, hosted by the Government of Japan, was held at Tokyo in November 1972. In 1974, the name of ECAFE was changed to Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Five years later, in line with its enlarged scope, the Commission decided that APC should thereafter be referred to as the Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC). The Third and Fourth APPCs were convened at Colombo in September 1982 and at Bali, Indonesia, in August 1992, respectively. The most recent APPC was held at Bangkok in December 2002. Today, half a year after the Fifth APPC, it seems appropriate to reflect on the evolution of issues and opinions since the 1963 Conference.

The following paragraphs will describe the development of the Conferences in terms of participation, organization and especially the debate on emerging issues in response to the changing demographic scene. The population growth pattern and the general locale that prompted the discussions during the first and subsequent Conferences will be set forth. The role of the United Nations, especially ESCAP, in placing population issues on the agendas of Governments across the Asian and Pacific region will also be portrayed.

Organization

Purpose

The First APC provided a forum where experts examined the major problems of planning for economic and social development arising from present and

prospective trends in population growth, composition and distribution. During the Second APC, participants arrived at a better understanding of the central role of population in achieving development goals. Governments in the region were assisted in ascertaining and applying the most effective means of influencing population trends and patterns in order to hasten the attainment of the Second United Nations Development Decade goals. A further understanding of the two-way interrelationships between population and development and the need to consider relevant factors fully in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes to achieve overall national development goals were the aims of the Third APPC. The Fourth APPC enabled Governments in the region to understand clearly the strategic value of formulating multidisciplinary policies and programmes, to realize the need to integrate research and evaluation into programme planning and implementation and to appreciate the role of population data and information in policy formulation and programme implementation. Progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the Bali Declaration, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the five-year reviews and appraisals of the Bali Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Millennium Declaration adopted at the United Nations Millennium Summit was reviewed during the Fifth APPC.

Participation

Participation in the Conferences more than doubled from some 20 members and associate members in the ECAFE region in 1963 to 42 ESCAP members and associate members in 2002. Selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foundations were invited to attend the First APC. In attendance were the trainees and staff of the Bombay Demographic Training and Research Centre.

In addition to the 21 ECAFE members and associate members, United Nations bodies, United Nations specialized agencies and NGOs, 38 experts in demography and related disciplines were appointed as resource persons to assist in the Second APC, held in 1972. A decade later, 32 members and associate members of the Commission took part in the Third APPC together with representatives of United Nations bodies, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and observers from various organizations in the region. In Bali, the Fourth APPC changed in format with two different segments: senior officials from 36 members and associate members of ESCAP gathering first for six days, followed by a two-day meeting of ministers from 40 members and associate members of the region. Forty-two members and associate members sent their senior officials to

the Fifth APPC while 26 ministers from 23 countries were present during the ministerial meeting. A large number of representatives from United Nations Headquarters, United Nations bodies, United Nations specialized agencies as well as intergovernmental organizations and NGOs registered for these last two Conferences.

Opening addresses

Heads of State have usually inaugurated the Conference. In his opening address, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated that the New Delhi Conference was the first to deal with subjects that were highly important to the world at large and to Asia in particular. The ECAFE countries and areas faced a race between the growth rates of the economy and that of population, he explained, hoping that the Conference would initiate a combined approach to common problems in the region with assistance from non-Asian countries.

Inaugurating the Second APC, the Japanese Vice-Prime Minister Takeo Miki stressed that Asia was the focal point of the world population problem and anticipated that the 1970s would be for Asia an age of action closely tied to policy. He counted upon the Second APC to provide momentum for the attainment of the Second United Nations Development Decade objectives.

The President of Sri Lanka, J.R. Jayewardene, observed in front of the representatives gathered for the Third APPC that Asian and Pacific countries experienced similar demographic problems where the solution applied in one situation could be adapted in another with modifications to suit local social, political, cultural and economic needs. He perceived great scope for regional cooperation in the population field among ESCAP countries and areas. The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, R. Premadasa, urged the Third APPC to seriously consider adopting a regional population plan of action.

The Minister of State for Population and Environment of Indonesia, Emil Salim, speaking to the senior officials assembled at Bali for the Fourth APPC, stressed that the adoption of a participatory approach to cover the broadest possible range of issues would be most appropriate for reconciling population concerns, environmental factors and development objectives. In inaugurating the Meeting of Ministers, President Soeharto of Indonesia remarked that development not merely dealt with economic growth and related issues, rather it concerned people and whether they could live decently and prosperously. Future generations in the

region might have a better quality of life if the resolutions and recommendations of the Fourth APPC were implemented.

Sudarat Keyuraphan, Minister of Public Health of Thailand, in her address to the Senior Officials Meeting at Bangkok, observed that the strategies and approaches introduced in earlier APPCs and ICPD by providing specific goals and a focused framework within a specific time frame would help to reduce poverty and improve the people's quality of life. The best practices or lessons learned from neighbouring countries could provide valuable models for this purpose and strengthen partnership through South-South cooperation. Inaugurating the Meeting of Ministers, Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, stated that the recommendations emerging from the discussions during the Senior Officials Meeting provided the ministers with important guidelines for interventions and policies to promote informed choice, create opportunities, reduce poverty and improve the welfare and quality of life of people in the region.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Executive Secretary of the Commission and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also gave opening statements or had their messages read before the Delegations. To draw attention to the 1974 United Nations World Population Conference (WPC), Antonio Carrillo-Flores, WPC Secretary-General, stated that the Second APC paved the way for the 1974 WPC. In the same manner, speaking to the senior officials assembled in Bali in 1992, the Secretary-General of the 1994 ICPD elaborated on the policy agenda for the future, observing that the APPCs had come to symbolize leadership in the population and development field.

Agenda

The agendas of the five Conferences varied from simple consideration of the regional demographic situation and the economic and social implications of prospective population trends in 1963 to issues related to the themes adopted at the Conferences that followed. Recurring topics for the first four Conferences were the demographic situation and future outlook, research and training and information dissemination. The First APC participants unanimously adopted a resolution inviting Commission members to adopt a positive population policy related to their individual needs, keeping in mind the Conference recommendations relating to national population policies when formulating and executing their general socio-economic development policies and plans.

Family planning programmes and the ecological implications of rural and urban change were two new topics introduced at the Second APC. Held during the Second United Nations Development Decade, the Conference adopted a Declaration of Population Strategy for Development containing recommendations ranging from labour utilization to land reform, from pollution to planning mechanisms and from contraception to construction.

Under the theme “An integrated approach to population and related developmental issues”, representatives at the Third APPC reviewed the progress made by members in implementing the recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action approved at Bucharest in 1974 and considered actions to be taken in the future. The formulation and implementation of integrated population and development policies and urbanization and the growth of cities were added to the agenda along with the evaluation of integrated family planning/family welfare/family health programme schemes and strategies. With the Commission enlarged to embrace the Pacific countries and areas, the population problems of small island States gained prominence. In response to the urging of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, a regional population plan of action, the Asia-Pacific Call for Action on Population and Development, was adopted by the delegations during the plenary session.

The theme chosen for the Fourth APPC was “Population and sustainable development: goals and strategies into the twenty-first century”. The agenda included a discussion of the socio-economic implications of population ageing as well as human resources development and poverty alleviation issues. After examining the population situation and outlook and noting the substantial progress achieved by the region’s countries in responding to the Asia-Pacific Call for Action on Population and Development adopted at the previous APPC, the meeting of ministers adopted the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development.

The theme of the Fifth APPC, “Population and poverty in Asia and the Pacific”, emphasized the need to re-evaluate the links between population and development and to crystallize and revitalize the thinking on the links between population and poverty in the light of the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000. To highlight the theme, the first agenda item taken up was population and poverty in Asia and the Pacific. Adolescent reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and poverty, gender equality and development, behavioural change communication and advocacy as tools for population and development and poverty reduction were new topics covered in the Bangkok agenda. The senior officials

strongly reaffirmed their commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action, which continued to serve as their guide in undertaking their reproductive health programmes. Future activities to advance the Bali and ICPD agendas to reflect realistically the needs of the region's countries and their expectations from international partners towards meeting those needs are embodied in the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted by the meeting of ministers after a vote.

The debates

Knowledge and understanding of the demographic situation and population problems of most countries in the region were still rudimentary at the time of the First APC despite progress made since the 1955 Bandung Seminar. In 1963, only a few Governments recognized the implications of high population growth rates. Only five administrations in the region had official population policies. The region's population totalled about 1.7 billion. Recognizing the role of demographic factors in economic and social development, the representatives stressed that moderation of population growth was a matter of great urgency and family size limitation should be accorded the highest possible priority in development programmes. Industrialization, land reform and other programmes were recognized to have accelerated socio-economic development. The Conference agreed that rapid population growth in many of the region's less developed countries was impeding socio-economic progress and threatening the success of efforts to reach satisfactory levels of living within a tolerable length of time. The Conference called on the United Nations and its specialized agencies to expand the scope of their technical assistance. The Commission was requested to: (a) strengthen its regional advisory services in the demographic field; (b) increase opportunities for qualified students from countries in the region to obtain fellowships for advanced studies in demography and related fields; (c) strengthen its secretariat assigned to work on population matters so as to enable it to render effective services to government agencies and institutions working in this field; (d) compile and analyse statistical data and other information on the demography of countries in the region, and prepare reports for publication on various aspects of the demographic situation and prospects in the region and the interrelation of population trends with social and economic development; and (e) arrange for fundamental research on population questions to be carried out by universities and research institutions within the region in coordination with the Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning and other regional demographic training and research facilities.

In 1972, the region's population had risen to 2.1 billion. Fifteen member countries had official population policies and another 10 were actively supporting family planning programmes. Against this backdrop, the Second APC considered the need to formulate population policies and programmes as integral parts of the social and economic development process and recognized the two-way relationship of population with socio-economic development. The delegations stressed that reducing infant and maternal mortality, achieving full and productive employment, abating excessive migration flows to the larger cities and improving the status of women ensured a more equitable distribution of opportunity and income. Governments seeking to fulfil the ideals of their people and their national goals through population policies and programmes should: (a) provide information, education and services for all their citizens as early as possible; (b) encourage smaller families in rural and urban areas through intensive information, education and communication efforts together with the enactment of appropriate socio-economic measures; (c) consider establishing population commissions or other bodies having multidisciplinary and multidepartmental representation to assess the current status and future needs in the population and family planning fields; (d) ensure coordination among various agencies at all levels in order to expedite action on integrated development policies and plans; (e) provide essential training facilities to improve management and planning skills, and promote comprehensive and innovative population policies to increase population and family planning programme administrative capabilities; (f) encourage the development of new communication tools and utilization of existing ones so that knowledge might be shared at all levels of society; and (g) include provisions in population policy and programmes to ensure that all pertinent information reached policy makers, opinion leaders and socio-economic planners.

With a population exceeding 2.5 billion in 1982, the ESCAP region witnessed significant declines in fertility and mortality. However, population growth rates were higher than desired in 16 countries while 10 still had life expectancies of 50 years or under. Sixteen countries had fertility reduction policies and an even greater number supported family planning programmes. At the Third APPC, participants pointed out that most ESCAP countries and areas recognized the integrated approach. However, that approach had included maternal and child health since the early 1970s and more recently other programmes such as those related to the status of women had been added. While population programme managers were willing to involve other development sectors, corresponding responses had not always been forthcoming from the other sectors. The problem centred on how to design a coordinated approach to population and development

policies so as to obtain the support of other sectors. The slow progress of integration was due both to the limited knowledge base relating to diverse population processes and to a likelihood that planning structures and approaches had become rigid, thus precluding the needs of population planning being taken into account. Population programmes had to be accorded an appropriate place in a Government's political and administrative structure. High-level population units had to be established within development planning organizations responsible for integrating population policies and programmes with related social and economic development policies and programmes. The concept of integration and the policies relating to integration of family planning services with other programmes had also to consider the programme recipients' viewpoint. An effective monitoring system needed to be established to undertake systematic and periodic evaluation of integrated population policies and programmes. Programmes that resulted in diminishing demand for large families should be given priority with a view to creating a socio-economic environment conducive to reducing the population growth rate.

Although considerable progress has been made in the matter of implementing population programmes, a wide gap exists between current fertility and mortality levels and fertility and mortality goals. For the first time, the 1982 APPC included population goals in its Asia-Pacific Call for Action. Existing targets and goals for reducing birth and death rates must be reviewed and modified to attain low levels as early as possible and attain a replacement level of fertility by the year 2000. Towards that end, the necessary information, education and a variety of means to practice family planning freely, effectively and in accordance with their cultural values and religious beliefs should be available and accessible to all couples and individuals. Family planning services should be strengthened through the involvement of local population and local institutions in planning, funding and implementing family planning information and services. Programme personnel should be reoriented to make family planning programmes more sensitive and responsive to local values and individual needs.

The small island countries and areas of the ESCAP region, because of their size, are economically, socially, environmentally and even demographically vulnerable. Thus, particular attention is required to protect their demographic and cultural viability. This is especially true for those countries subject to emigration. Hence, small island countries and areas, particularly those subject to emigration, were enjoined to formulate social, economic and population policies that would maintain their demographic and cultural viability.

A revolution in thinking about population issues had occurred in the ESCAP region since 1963. Many Governments had launched ambitious programmes with the result that the average annual population growth rate for Asia and the Pacific was just over 1.7 per cent in 1990 with a population numbering around 3.3 billion. The delegations to the Fourth APPC saw that high population growth and density in many countries had caused various environmental and related problems: continuing depletion and degradation of vital natural resources, the persistence of poverty among the rural population and a growing rural-urban income gap, increasing and competing demands for land, water and forests by the non-agricultural sectors and growing urban population, and deteriorating environmental quality owing to unregulated industrial and urban growth. To overcome those problems, the policies and strategies formulated should include development of environmentally friendly technology, reforestation, improvement of air and water quality, waste recycling and the phasing-out of environmentally harmful technology, improving environmental organization, administration and management, as well as appropriate laws and effective law enforcement.

The Bali Conference was concerned that the growing threat to the environment and urban infrastructure posed by rural-urban migration and by the high rate of natural increase in the urban population required effective monitoring of trends and family planning strategies that took account of the population impact. A comparatively new phenomenon in an increasing number of countries of the region was the growing quantum of female migration, including migration of single women. A better understanding of the demographic, economic and social implications of such migration was essential. The management of metropolitan cities was another issue that deserved high priority. In several countries, the growth rate of large cities had slackened. Small cities were suffering from stagnation and obsolescence while medium-size cities were expanding rapidly. Spatial implications and environmental consequences of major sectoral policies should be fully assessed as part of the national development planning process to achieve balanced urbanization, keeping in mind the objective of reducing rural-urban disparities, regional disparities within countries and the need to protect the environment. To cope with rapid urbanization, Governments should create a favourable climate for private sector investment in smaller towns and cities and provide the required support mechanisms, such as physical and social infrastructure and advantageous fiscal and monetary policies.

The Bali Conference was also concerned that while the proportion of older persons remained low in many ESCAP countries, the absolute number of older

persons was swelling. The trends and patterns in population movements had further added to the ageing of rural areas, as those who migrated to urban areas tended to be young and able, leaving behind the elderly to attend to farming and other agricultural pursuits, thus adversely affecting agricultural production. Hence, migration had to be closely monitored and redirected by creating job opportunities and other incentives for the young to remain in rural areas. The Conference stressed the need to create awareness of ageing issues and provide the necessary incentives for families to continue caring for their elderly. Emphasis was laid on strengthening community support through the formation of voluntary and mutual aid organizations; encouraging communities to provide the necessary services for elderly care and integrating older persons into all aspects of development; establishing appropriate home industries that enabled the elderly to work at their own pace; and initiating training programmes to improve the productivity of the elderly and their continued participation in the advancement of new technologies and industries.

The population of countries and areas comprising the ESCAP region reached 3.7 billion in the year 2000, i.e., double the population 40 years earlier, and accounting for approximately 62 per cent of the world's population. Fertility levels were diminishing in almost all countries of the region because of family planning services provided under government programmes, among other factors. The Fifth APCC noted that many developing countries in the region were characterized by overpopulation, poverty, malnutrition, poor health and inadequate and unsustainable health-care financing. While economic growth was essential for development and poverty reduction, lowering fertility and population growth rates was equally important in that regard. There was increasing evidence to indicate that the alterations in age structure taking place in most countries could contribute significantly to economic growth if appropriate policies were put in place such as pro-poor economic and social policies that promoted choice; enhanced the development of, access to and utilization of resources; improved gender equity and equality; and increased access to reproductive health, including family planning.

Adolescent reproductive health information and service programmes were still in the early stages of development, were too narrowly focused and were not adequately available to adolescents in general and unmarried adolescents in particular, with young people not often involved in programme planning and development. The Conference strongly supported the right of young people to adolescent reproductive health, especially as a means for preventing unwanted

pregnancies, abortion and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The delegations observed that where social, cultural or religious barriers existed to prevent young people from obtaining information on sexual matters at home, sex education and training in life skills should be provided for young people in and outside the school systems, especially in view of their exposure to conflicting forms of information on sexual matters through the media, pornographic sites on the Internet and the popularity of its unmoderated electronic “chat rooms”. Behavioural change communication, advocacy and education programmes should be implemented to raise awareness and enhance communication with parents, families, teachers, religious and community leaders, service providers and other adults, peer groups and mass media on improved reproductive health for adolescents.

Many Asian and Pacific countries assessed the existing policy environment and resource base for mainstreaming gender concerns, established national machineries and focal points and developed national plans of action for improving the status of women. While substantial progress had been demonstrated through improved education, health status and labour force participation of females, the gains were unequal among the countries of the region. Although the gender gap had narrowed somewhat in terms of gross enrolment at the primary level, the female disadvantage persisted at the higher educational levels in almost all countries and areas of the region. The share of female wage employment in the non-agricultural sector was low and the proportion of seats held by women in parliaments remained under 10 per cent, on average. Emerging issues in the region included the marginalization of female employment, the rise in poor female-headed households, increase in girl-child labour and trafficking of women and children. Governments in cooperation with civil society organizations and the international community were urged to reduce the marginalization of women in employment through policies and programmes that addressed gender-based discrimination and also reduced the negative impact of globalization on women’s employment while recognizing its positive impact in empowering women and augmenting opportunities in decision-making. Exploitation of children could be eliminated through vigorous policy actions and their effective implementation. Awareness of gender-based violence should be increased, relevant laws simplified and law enforcement officials trained to ensure the effective enforcement of adequate and appropriate legislative and programmatic responses to violence against women and exploitation, including trafficking. Policies should be formulated to promote greater male involvement and participation in improving gender equality, equity and empowerment of women.

Role of the United Nations, ECAFE and ESCAP

At its 1964 session, the Commission unanimously adopted resolution 54 (XX) of 17 March 1964, in which it requested the secretariat to expand its activities in particular fields of work relating to the population problems of the region. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1048 (XXXVII) in August 1964, commending ECAFE for organizing the First APC and drawing the attention of the General Assembly to the Commission's resolution. ECAFE continued to be the focal point among countries and areas in the region in the population dialogue and in population information dissemination. The Commission members welcomed the secretariat's work in family planning and in the relationship between population and agricultural change.

The secretariat played a central role in initiating debate on population and development issues in the region, providing the forum for the region's developing countries to address them and assisting those countries through its regional programmes, advisory services, training and information dissemination activities. The Bali Conference called upon ESCAP to continue to play a pivotal role in assisting members and associate members in implementing their population and development policies and programmes. It recommended that ESCAP fully incorporate the population dimension into the focus of three thematic committees: regional economic cooperation, environment and sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

The capacity of the United Nations system to provide assistance to countries was increased as a result of the establishment of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) in 1967. Its resources through voluntary contributions from countries grew from US\$ 7 million in 1970 to nearly US\$ 40 million in 1972. Those funds were available for projects related to all aspects of population, including family planning programmes in developing countries. The extension of the UNFPA system of country coordinators, together with the United Nations Development Programme's newly instituted system of country programming, helped to prevent duplication of effort and of measures that were not mutually supporting. UNFPA had taken steps to increase its administrative capacity to respond more effectively to requests for assistance from Commission members for the design and implementation of their population policies in

accordance with national priorities, working closely with government officials to ensure effective coordination and harmonization of population activities and to develop fully national capacity for self-reliance. UNFPA assisted ESCAP in playing an enhanced role in helping developing countries in the region to shape their future population policies and programmes.

Since 1990, the ESCAP region has been the second-largest recipient of population assistance after sub-Saharan Africa. According to UNFPA, final expenditures for population assistance in the region increased from US\$ 211.5 million in 1990 to US\$ 389.3 million in the year 2000. The bilateral and multilateral channels each accounted for over 30 per cent of funds expended in the region. A total of 39 countries and territories in the region benefited from international population assistance in 2000 with Bangladesh, India and the Philippines as the top three recipient countries. A total of US\$ 19.5 million was spent on regional programmes.

Appropriate steps have been taken to reorient the Asian and Pacific regional programme on population and sustainable development with a view to assisting developing countries in the region, paying special attention to least developed countries, in response to the challenges that they face and the need to strengthen national capacity. In that regard, ESCAP staff members have provided technical assistance to a large number of members and associate members of the Commission on a wide range of population and reproductive health issues during the years since the adoption of the resolution 54/4 on 22 April 1998. Such assistance has included policy and programme development, capacity-building, the collection and analysis of data from censuses and surveys, detailed analysis of and research on priority issues, as well as programme monitoring and evaluation of population and reproductive health programmes. Staff members of ESCAP have acted as resource persons for intercountry workshops on population and reproductive health issues organized by the secretariat, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for East and South-East Asia, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. A considerable number of seminars, expert group meetings and training workshops have been organized for capacity development in the region on various aspects of population and development and for maximizing the benefits of modern information technologies for processing and disseminating data and information.

Reflections

From the First APC in 1963 to the Fifth APPC in 2002, the Conferences have dealt with population concerns at the regional and global levels. The purposes of the Conferences, the themes, the agenda items taken up during the successive meetings and the resolutions and plans of action adopted by delegations at each Conference all reflected the predominant population and development issues at the time.

What is striking is the strong will and collaboration shown by the Commission's members and associate members in tackling what they perceived to be critical demographic problems and in arriving at pertinent solutions. The technical and financial support of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and UNFPA, enabled member States to embark on family planning and reproductive health programmes to achieve their population and development goals.

The Fifth APPC revealed the dramatic reversal in thinking of the Government of the United States of America since the 1994 ICPD. While the United States actively supported the paradigm shift to reproductive health in Cairo, the change of administration in the year 2000 has led to its vigorous campaign against reaffirming the ICPD Programme of Action in toto, objecting to such terms as reproductive health, reproductive health services and adolescent reproductive health in the belief that these terms promote abortion and underage sex. Thus, the United States delegation attempted to substantially revise or to block the adoption of the draft Plan of Action during the Fifth APPC. This caused the other delegations to take a unified stand to reaffirm the ICPD Programme of Action. If the United States stand remains unaltered in the coming decade, holding a 10-year review and appraisal of ICPD (ICPD+10) or a Sixth APPC would likely be an exercise in futility.

It is imperative that the population community sustain its efforts to keep the population perspective in the forefront of issues such as globalization, environment and sustainable development even if the Plan of Action in these areas ignores population, as was patently obvious at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held at Johannesburg, South Africa. By reiterating its

affirmation of the relevant international conventions, by vigorously lobbying at international forums and by supporting regional collaboration in population and development programmes, the population community underscores the importance of maintaining the population perspective in the discussion of issues germane to genuine development.

Endnote

This paper was based on the reports of each of the five Asian (and Pacific) Population Conferences held since 1963 and the papers prepared by the secretariat and UNFPA for the Fifth APPC.