



Republic of Tunisia
Chamber of Deputies

Global Committee of Parliamentarians
on Population and Development

Arab Parliamentary Conference on Development and Population

8 - 11 MAY 1984 — TUNIS, TUNISIA

STEERING COMMITTEE

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League of Arab States

Organization of Islamic Conference

THE FINAL REPORT

COOPERATING ORGANIZATIONS

United Nations
Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Fund for
Population Activities (UNFPA)

United Nations
Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Bank

Economic and Social Commission
for Africa (ECA)

Economic and Social Commission
for West Asia (ECWA)

International Planned
Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

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THE FINAL REPORT

FIRST: THE OPENING SESSION:

The Conference of the Arab parliamentarians and legislators on Development and Population was held at the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies in Bardo from the 8th to the 11th of May 1984. Delegates from sixteen Arab countries and observers from regional and international organizations took part in this conference (see appendix). At the opening session which, in addition to the participating delegations, was attended by members of the Tunisian Government, members of the accredited diplomatic corps in Tunis, and other personalities. Mr. Malmoud MESSAADI, President of the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies delivered an opening speech welcoming the participants.

The next speakers were Mr. Chedli KLIBI, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; the representative of Mr. Habib CHATTI, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; Mr. Pio-Carlo Terenzio, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; the representative of Mr. Janvier PEREZ DE CUELLAR, the United Nations Secretary-General; and the representative of Mr. Takeo Fukuda, the Chairman of the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. The session was closed by the speech of Mr. Mohamed MZALI, the Tunisian Prime Minister. Due to their significance, the text of these speeches will be attached to this report.

SECOND: ORGANIZATION:

1. The delegates unanimously elected the Conference Bureau as follows:
 - A. Mr. Mahmoud Messaadi, President of the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies, Chairman of the Conference.
 - B. Mr. Youssef Al Said (Sudan) and Mr. Mohsen Al Farhoud (Iraq), Deputy-Chairmen.
 - C. Dr. Mohamed Rachidi (Morocco), Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

It was decided that the Drafting Committee remain accessible to the delegates who want to join it, provided each delegation be represented by a single representative.

2. The Conference endorsed the agenda and the statute submitted to it (see appendices).

THIRD: SPEECHES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

During the meeting which followed the Opening Session, three speeches were delivered by delegates of the World Bank, the UNDP, and the UNFPA. Deliberations centered on the following points:

- * World Bank relations with Third World countries: ideas were put forward to promote these relations with a view to subsidizing raw materials exported by these countries, examining the possibilities of debt repayment in local currencies and establishing a closer relation between investment

requirements and a correlation between population growth and the increase in the level of the national product.

- * Lack of the necessary statistics in most Arab countries and the effect this has on planning.
- * Imbalance between the importance attached to planning on the financial and economic level and the importance given to population planning.
- * Disparities in resources between the Arab countries with emphasis on the possibility of ensuring economic complementarity between countries with financial surpluses and countries with human, agricultural and industrial potentials.
- * Efforts made by the Arab States to attain economic complementarities through establishing development funds and banks, and providing some direct financial aid, noting the necessity to publicize these facts through media.

The evening session ended with a documentary film by UNICEF, which presented three successful experiments in reducing infant mortality.

FOURTH: DISCUSSIONS:

1. Development and population stand in close relationship. Population trends determine the requirements of development, for the main goal of development is the promotion of human well-being within an advanced and just society. Similarly, population indications are fundamentally affected by the type of development and its successful achievement.
2. The situation of the population in the Arab countries is in turn nothing else but the result of socio-economic development at both the regional and the national levels. One of the major characteristics of this development was its overall rapid pace especially in the economic and health fields. This development was, however, less rapid in the educational field, the improvement of which will naturally require a long time. One of the other salient feature of this development is the large disparity in economic growth between Arab countries, especially with respect to per capita income. On the whole, rich Arab countries have a shortage of labour force, while surpluses in these forces exist in other Arab countries. It was acknowledged that development in the Arab World is deeply affected by colonial aggressions, especially the Zionist aggression, which cause death and destruction, in addition to destabilizing social structures and creating the need to face these aggressions with potentials normally used to reinforce activities aimed at upgrading the living standards of the Arab people.
3. Population growth in most Arab countries is very high as compared to levels known in other areas. However, the resources available in the Arab World can absorb these surpluses if Arab development is considered at a regional level. Thus, high fertility should be assessed in relation to its impact on maternal and child health, the welfare of the family, and its freedom to decide on the number of its members in a conscious and responsible manner.
4. One of the major population aspects of the Arab region is the migration between Arab countries on the one hand and between the Arab region and other regions on the other. It was felt that non-Arab high employment rates in the region

are causing very serious social problems in some Arab countries and that it calls for serious action if the cultural security of the region is to be ensured and corresponding political and security problems are to be avoided.

The participants also discussed questions relating to the emigration of the Arab labour force to the industrialized countries and stressed the need to take appropriate steps to preserve the identity of this emigration and prepare for its return.

5. Among the questions which should be given particular attention in this regard are those related to the emigration of Arab skilled forces, which has reached a considerable level in the last few years. It is worth pointing out, in this respect, that Arab emigrants are sometimes better educated and more competent than the forces available in the industrialized countries where they emigrate. Thus, the Arab countries are merely extending technical assistance to industrialized countries. It was admitted that necessary legislation should be introduced and appropriate action be taken to contact competent Arab emigrants abroad, so that they may be in Arab development, and encouraged to return to their countries. The conference further affirmed that movement of Arab skilled forces among Arab countries cannot be considered as migration as it contributes to the economic and social integration of the region.
6. The participants to the conference focused on the question of forced migration from and to the Arab world and condemned the Zionist entity and its expansionist and settlement policies aimed at the alteration of the features of Arab land occupied by force and the expulsion of the Arab citizens from their homeland.
7. The participants to the conference acknowledged the importance of introducing laws and legislations to regulate movement inside the Arab region and stressed discrepancy between laws and practices that might arise at times. They emphasized the need for consolidating existing regional charters and achieving further bilateral and regional agreements faced by Palestinians in their movements across international borders and the need to give special attention to this question. They further emphasized the responsibility of Arab countries in protecting their citizens abroad and ensuring that they be given their rights and access to social facilities in the host countries.
8. Rural exodus, as it relates to population and development issues in the Arab world, is no less important than international migration. It was agreed that the basic issue in this connection lies in the rapid growth of the major cities and the resulting social and economic problems, in addition to the increasing economic domination by these cities of small and medium towns and rural areas in general. Therefore, for an adequate development in the Arab world, rural development and distribution of economic activities among different regions is a must. It is also necessary that social and economic sectors be part of a network of well-planned minor cities and that reverse migration be realized from the major cities to medium and small cities.
9. Delegates suggested that the rural sector be given priority in the regional and local development programmes in order to ensure food security in the region at the proper time and that drought be fought in the Arab countries affected by it.
10. Delegates examined women's roles in the context of family, social development, and economic activities. They noted that big differences in the educational and health levels of women exist in different Arab countries. The prevailing view

was that Arab governments should provide women with the opportunity to participate effectively in the development process and the decision-making that affect this process. But such participation cannot be attained fully unless women are given their fair share in the fields of education, health and work. Delegates noted also that sex differences should be eliminated as soon as possible by enacting necessary legislation and intensifying efforts in the above-mentioned fields of development.

11. Delegates emphasized that children are the cornerstone of the family and that Islam dictates that parents must take due care of their children. Since education and health are among the most important factors of an appropriate upbringing, sufficient funds should be devoted to them, both on the individual and the government levels. Although recently mortality rates have rapidly decreased in most Arab countries, most infant and children mortality still requires special efforts if it is to be reduced. The delegates paid special attention to the tragedies which befall Palestinian and Lebanese children as a result of the savage Israeli aggressions against civilians.
12. The delegates affirmed that the solution to development and population problems requires collective Arab efforts on a regional level, in addition to the local level. Regional planning has become an urgent necessity in order to face up to the social, economic, and security problems of the countries of the region. The less developed Arab countries need increasing aid from rich Arab countries, including intensification of Arab investments in these countries in addition to financial assistance to meet the requirements of economic and social development. The participants further pointed out that promoting this cooperation is both a national duty and a must.
13. There was some criticism of the scarcity of international resources being allocated to the Arab region, and an urgent call for their increase was made. Participants referred to the considerable amounts of money wasted on the armament race and to the urgent need for putting an end to this race, and called for the allocation of necessary funds to assist the Third World in its development efforts. International cooperation, would, however, be fruitless unless based on equality and mutual respect between countries. Countries of the North are called upon to adopt positive and flexible attitudes in their dialogue with countries of the South.
14. To develop the Third World, cooperation should be intensified among the developing countries themselves through increased trade, exchange of expertise, and combined efforts to solve common problems.

THE CLOSING SESSION:

15. The closing session was presided over by Mr. Mahmoud Messaadi, President of the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies. He gave the floor to the representative of the Director-General of UNESCO, who read the message of the Director-General, Mr. Ahmadou Mukhtar Mow. The message congratulated the organizers of the Conference, who had successfully discharged their mission. Dr. Mohammed Zakaria Ismail, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission of West Asia, delivered a speech detailing the background and results of the Amman meeting. He stressed the main points adopted during the meeting, which were included in the Amman Declaration. Mr. Sat Paul Mittal, Member of the Indian Parliament, Secretary-General of the International Parliamentary Assembly which will take place in Mexico City in August, and Secretary-General of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians, spoke of the pioneering role played by parliamentarians all over the world in the field of development and population. He thanked the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies for its hospitality, and the organizers of the Conference for their efforts. Next Mr. Pio-Carlo Terenzio, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, gave a speech explaining the importance the Union had placed on this conference and the activities of the Union in this regard, with particular emphasis on the African Conference on Population and Development, Nairobi 1981, the Seventy-first Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva 1984, and the Conference of the Arab Federation of Parliamentarians, Algiers 1984. Mr. Jose Antonio Alvarez Lima, Member of the Mexican Parliament, delivered a speech congratulating the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies for the success of the conference. He called upon the participants to attend the International Parliamentary Assembly which will be held in Mexico City. The delegates were read a cable from Mr. James H. Scheuer, member of the U.S. Congress and Executive Committee Chairman of the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. In his cable he apologized for not being able to attend the conference and sent his best wishes for the success of the endeavours of all participants.
16. After the speeches were delivered, Mr. Habib Majoul, Member of the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies, read a draft of the final report, which was received with unanimous approval. Dr. Mohammed Rachidi, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, read the draft of the Declaration of the Conference, which was also unanimously approved. Dr. Rachidi thanked the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies and the international organizations for their valuable contributions to the organization of the conference.
17. Dr. Rafiq Salahie spoke on behalf of the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development as co-sponsor of this conference and thanked the Tunisian authorities for their cooperation and hospitality. He stressed the fact that the success of the conference was largely due to their efforts.
18. Mr. Mahmoud Messaadi closed the session by listing the agencies which contributed to the organization and work of the conference, thanking them for their fruitful cooperation which provided for the successful work of the conference and its achievements.

ADDRESS BY MR. CHEDLI KLIBI, SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
ON THE OPENING OF THE ARAB PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION

Tunis, 5/8/84

Mr. Premier,
Mr. President of the Chamber of Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, and to express, on behalf of the League of Arab States, my satisfaction at seeing this conference being held and bringing together an elite gathering of parliamentarians and specialists on problems of population and development, and to express my regard for the noble aims you are working to achieve.

The League of Arab States indeed shares your interest in this vital question, for it is convinced of the necessity to improve the existence of humanity, to enable all people, without exception, to enjoy a better quality of life. The League works constantly within the Arab Nation to bring about global development and to affirm its conviction that man is both the instrument and the goal of this development, and that the degree of well-being achieved by him is the essential criterion in evaluating the progress made by Nations in all areas of life.

The League of Arab States demonstrated the great interest it brings to population and development issues when it called for the organization of an Arab conference to study population policies, to place them in their broadest social context, and to analyze the interconnections between the policies of housing and of development.

This conference was held in cooperation with the Economic Commission for West Asia (ECWA), at the end of March in Amman, and we are pleased to present to you the recommendations that were the outcome of its deliberations, and thus to contribute to the strengthening and success of your meeting here.

Mr. President,

Given the organic link between development and the population issue, it would make no sense to examine them apart from one another. The population issue constitutes an aspect of the development issue, which, by definition, is global, and which extends to the areas of nutrition,

education, health, housing, and environment. On the other hand, the demographic factor has both negative and positive repercussions on economic development.

It may be that within the Arab Nation the population issue seems more important to us because of its specificity and its obvious influence on the goals of development, national identity, and complementarity. Likewise, in the Arab world, the population issue appears in essence more a problem of quality than of quantity. Indeed, despite the high rate of population growth in the Arab world and the youthfulness of its population, development needs in the Arab countries can create the means to absorb the manpower supply, provided the skills of the available human resources are improved, and the appropriate conditions are created so that manual and intellectual workers living abroad can return to their native countries and contribute to the development of the Arab economy and the preservation of Arab national identity.

Mr. President,

Population problems are basically socioeconomic problems, closely tied to the development model chosen by each country, and influenced, to a certain degree, by the world economic order. Thus, examination of these problems requires an objective evaluation of all the economic and social data at the local and world levels, to see to what extent they impinge upon population policies and are in turn influenced by them.

Nevertheless, the population question as it is posed within the Arab Nation has a special character of an economic and social nature. Likewise, it has political dimensions which we must explain clearly to an international audience on every favorable occasion.

The fact is that the Arab Nation is today confronted by major challenges that threaten its existence, both materially and as a civilization, owing mainly to the actions of Israel, which aims to force an exodus of the Arab populations from the occupied territories; to implant Zionist settler colonies in these territories, to annex the Golan, to Judaize the holy city of Jerusalem, and to try to erase from it monuments of religion and civilization.

The most striking illustration of these actions consists in the plan recently revealed and attributed to former Israeli minister Ben Porat, which aims to cause the departure of the Palestinian refugees from the West Bank and the Gaza strip by destroying their camps, which are under the control

of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in order to reduce the Arab population density in these regions, as part of the Zionist plans for settler-colony implantation -- not to mention the political liquidation of the refugees through erasing the material traces of the crime perpetrated by Zionist entity against the Palestinian people.

The tragedy of the Palestinian people -- torn from their land and forced into exile and living in refugee camps for nearly four decades in which they have suffered the hardships of war -- the tragedy of this people is in itself one of the grave problems facing the Arab Nation in the area of population, of which the international community partly bears the consequences. Moreover, Israel's invasion of Lebanon has created terrible population problems from which wounded Lebanon will continue to suffer for some time. No less serious, moreover, is the danger faced by another Arab state, Iraq, as the result of a pitiless war that adds another threat to those looming over the Arab Nation.

These are a few of the problems relating to population that place the future in jeopardy -- problems we must face by redoubling our efforts, and whose solution requires that we win the support of the international community and of international opinion for the position adopted on this subject by the Arab states, a position essentially based on international legality. I hope you will give your attention to these problems and afford them their necessary role in your discussions and recommendations.

It is necessary to mention here that the Amman Declaration, adopted at the end of the Regional Conference, defined the problems which are of such scope as to threaten the existence of the Arab Nation, and expressed a unified Arab position concerning population problems -- present and future -- and which will be discussed by the International Conference on Population to be held in Mexico at the end of next summer.

Mr. President,

In addition to these special problems, the Arab Nation suffers from other problems related to population which are tied to the economic and social processes, and which also require serious examination. It is a question, first, of the distribution of efforts and the fruits of development, taking into account the geographic, structural, and social conditions, and the inability to master the problem of regional development, which has meant that the rural exodus has increased and that the inhabitants are piling up in the cities and metropolises -- not to speak of the obviously

poor capacity of the Arab labor markets to absorb this excess population, of the increase in unemployment (which is reflected in the falling standard of living of rural inhabitants who are crowding the cities), of the structural deterioration of agricultural production, and of the decay of the system of agricultural labor markets, and of rural development in general.

The two questions of the rural exodus and of emigration, and their various implications, constitute a population problem from which the Arab Nation has been suffering for nearly two decades, and which has caused several imbalances, in terms of the demographic structure and the labor supply structures.

There can be no doubt, in view of the seriousness of this problem, that the Arab Nation needs a combination of policies worked out by the states and by the Nation as a whole in order to confront it.

We are indeed faced, in some parts of the Arab Nation, by foreign immigration. On the other hand, we are seeing an exodus of manual and intellectual workers toward Europe and America, in addition to vast population movements within each Arab state. These three processes reveal central problems that can only be solved through the working out of a global Arab vision of the opportunities to be granted for the circulation of Arab labor among the Arab states -- a vision that could reduce the needs for foreign labor and the need for our people to expatriate themselves, and could gradually repatriate the Arab emigres so that they might participate in the development of those states of ours that need their experience and abilities. This implies the establishment of a global Arab development strategy to promote the labor supply and encourage its use across the Arab world.

Mr. President,

I would like, if I may, to go into another type of population problem with which the Arab Nation is confronted, and which is connected with satisfying basic needs in the areas of education, employment, health, and nutrition. Education within our Nation indeed continues to suffer from the overcrowding of our schools; large numbers of school-age children are deprived of education, and the illiteracy rate remains high.

In terms of employment, joblessness continues, in many Arab states, to be the primary population problem.

With regard to health, disease remains the major cause of infant mortality; endemic diseases have not yet been eliminated; and the principle of health for all remains a dream difficult to fulfill.

As for nutrition, it constitutes one of the most serious problems, requiring thorough consideration, in order to raise the means of production and reduce dependency on foreign countries, which is a real threat to the future of the Arab Nation.

Undoubtedly, these various problems concerning the fight against illiteracy, the improvement of medical care, and the establishment of secure food supplies are interconnected and should not in any case be dissociated and dealt with outside of a global vision, in view of the implications of each one, their positive and negative impact on one another, and the connections they all have with the global development process, and, above all, with economic prosperity.

Mr. President,

No one is unaware that the economic situation in the Arab countries -- over and above the diversity of their governments -- has suffered the aftereffect of the crises that have shaken the world economic system. This situation has worsened as a result of an enormous population growth, and because the productive structures in most Arab states have not achieved enough strength to overcome these problems.

In order to find solutions to the population problems in the Arab states, we would have to carry out the review which the current reality demands of us: a review of development goals in the Arab countries, and a review of the development methods followed, in which the influence of models imported from abroad is dominant. No one can believe today that the mere fact of following an economic expansion policy is sufficient in itself to achieve real overall development. On the contrary, a system of economic, social, and cultural goals must take their place in the scale of priorities and must come into play in order to meet basic social needs, to increase the productive forces, and to bring about conditions for the progress of civilization. Likewise, Arab complementarity in development is a question that cannot be ignored. The development of states cannot achieve the goals they have set if this dimension is not taken into consideration across the Arab Nation.

Mr. President,

These population problems with which the Arab Nation is confronted are not, we believe, specific to the Arab states. On the contrary, it is the fate of most Third World peoples, who are now going through one of their most difficult periods as a result of the changes that have taken place on the world scene -- where national egoisms clash sharply; international tensions are growing; regional conflicts are proliferating; and the peoples' resources are being used up in marginal conflicts that distract them from the realization of their goals in the area of development.

Must we insist here on the fact that there is no genuine development without freedom and dignity, and that colonial domination, foreign occupation, wars, racial segregation, traces of neocolonialism, and the poor distribution of resources constitute some of the obstacles to progress in the Third World? Such are precisely the basic principles adopted by the international community at Bucharest in 1974, through the World Population Plan of Action.

But how far are we from putting these principles into action?

It is sufficient to review rapidly the social and economic transformations in the world over the last decade to see how far the peoples' quality of life has deteriorated, how much their standard of living has fallen. Indeed, a billion persons, most of them from the Third World, have not seen an improvement in their situation. They live in poverty and suffer from malnutrition, endemic diseases, and illiteracy, which closes the doors of the future to them.

We know that humanity lost one child out of every ten born in 1979, the International Year of the Child; and that three of these ten children die before their fifth year. But another terrifying fact is that half of those who survive will not learn to read or write, and that most of these victims live in Third World countries, especially in the African countries, which suffer from the harshness of natural conditions, the mediocrity of financial resources necessary to development efforts, and the ceaseless conflicts that have given rise to frequent waves of refugees and to extreme population instability. This group of factors has resulted in a terrible drop in the standard of living. Now, while the problems of illiteracy, poverty, hunger and disease remain problems difficult to solve from which Third World peoples are suffering, and while all resources and all investments should be directed toward improving the human condition and insuring that a minimum number of basic human needs are met, we see that world military expenses are reaching staggering figures, which would

have amply sufficed to carry out development in most developing countries.

Mr. President,

Our world urgently needs peace, so that its peoples can devote themselves to the problems of development in an international climate of peace and stability. In this regard, the Near East is considered as one of the regions that has the greatest need to restore peace, especially since for generations it has been the continual scene of upheavals and wars. This situation has grown even worse since the beginning of Zionist expansion in the region, an expansion that has been reflected in a series of attacks on the Palestinian people and the neighboring Arab states, so that Zionist military might now extends into the heart of the Arab Nation.

And I would like to state once again in your presence that the Arab peoples aspire to peace, but peace with respect for the dignity and sovereignty of peoples, peace on the basis of the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and in particular their right to build an independent state on the soil of their fatherland, a peace that will bring about Israel's withdrawal from all the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967 as well as from the south of Lebanon.

In order to insure peace in the region, at the Fez Summit in 1982 our states presented a coherent plan, the eight points of which were drawn from Security Council resolutions and from resolutions and recommendations adopted by the General Assembly concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict and what is known as the "Middle East problem".

Thus, once again, our states proved that it is Israel which persists in rejecting all plans for a peaceful settlement, including that of President Reagan himself. Israel's rejection of all these attempts to establish peace has no other grounds than the fact that this Zionist state does not recognize the International Law that prohibits both the forceful seizure of the territories of others and attacks on peoples in order to rule over them and carry out hegemonic designs to their detriment.

That is why, when the Israeli leaders claim that they are ready to negotiate with any Arab state, while refusing all contacts with representatives of the Palestinian people, we tell them: "The Arab states have no other problem to discuss with Israel than that of the Palestinian people; a problem for which our states went to war with Israel and made sacrifices of territory and men. That is why our states could not, under any

circumstances, engage in a peace settlement with Israel as long as it has not recognized the right of the Palestinian people to an independent and fully sovereign state.

Mr. President,

On the eastern limits of the Arab world a deadly war is taking place between two Islamic states. It has destroyed immense material and human resources because of its long duration. It is unfortunate that Iranian intransigence is placing obstacles in the way of a cessation of hostilities, since mediation attempts have been futile despite the good intentions shown by Iraq, which has declared its willingness to cease fighting and submit to international or Islamic law.

Despite the failure of all Arab, Islamic and international efforts so far applied at different levels, we feel it is our duty to everyone to continue our actions aimed at ending the war, in the interest of the two neighboring peoples, and in order to preserve an important region of the Arab Nation, which is justifiably considered one of the most sensitive regions in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The security which the world needs today demands that we call for an end to the arms race, but it also demands at the same time that we give development problems all the attention they deserve. For our part we feel that arms limitation and development are among the biggest challenges facing humanity in our era; and unless there is a substantial improvement in the international situation in favor of these two objectives, the gap, in terms of development, will widen even more alarmingly; and world investments will continue to be directed toward serving interests that are not those of the majority of the world's population, perpetuating what has occurred in the last two decades. This can only increase the tensions and dangers threatening peace in the world.

There remains this great question: how can hunger, poverty, and disease be defeated and peace established? And can this goal be attained before the end of this century?

From this platform our states address all the international bodies in general, and the International Conference on Population in particular, reaffirming their willingness to cooperate with other states to bring about an international solidarity that can make it possible to face up to the present situation and to master it for the benefit of all humanity.

Our states are convinced that the economic, social, and political problems facing the world are not due solely to temporary conjunctural causes, and that in order to solve them it is not enough to increase foreign aid, even if such aid is necessary and even constitutes a moral duty for the remainder of countries that have the means.

The world social and economic situation suffers from long-lasting evils due to the nature of world structures and the organization of international relations. It follows that the initiatives taken at the national level by Third World countries to improve the living conditions of their peoples cannot have the hoped-for results if they are not accompanied by qualitative changes in international relations. Hence the necessity of a real dialogue between the North and South, implying a conviction on both sides that the crisis is not a crisis of the South alone, but a world crisis, that cooperation and solidarity should replace relations of dependency among Nations and States, and that mutual aid is the only way to insure the progress and wellbeing of all humanity.

Our states are convinced that it is necessary to see the international crises that have become the trademark of our contemporary world from an angle that makes it possible to glimpse a ray of hope leading to action and to further efforts. For these crises themselves are turning-points, each of which contains the seeds of new opportunities that we must discover and seize in order to establish an international community more conscious of the dangers in store for it, and to facilitate agreement on a more balanced economic order, one of the bases of which would be a more just international division of labor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What we undoubtedly expect from this international conference for which you are preparing is that it should determine international responsibility in achieving the wellbeing of man, whether he lives in the East or in the West, in the North or in the South of the planet.

We hope that there will be unanimity on the mobilization of resources through the medium of international organizations; on freeing these resources from pressures and channeling them toward the development of the Third World countries; on the creation of a production base, each country relying on itself, which in no case means that countries should turn inward on themselves, but that each country should be able to play the role most favorable to it within a coherent and balanced economic order and a more just international division of labor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The problem of the international debt has grown worse by vast percentages for the Third World countries over the last few years, to the point that the international financial and economic system has been exposed to the most awesome dangers. Now the efforts under way to solve the problem practically testify to a misunderstanding of its real and essential causes, which lie in the very foundations of the system, since people are satisfied with submitting proposals for the renegotiation of each country's debts separately.

The nonmilitary foreign debt of the developing countries has now reached nearly \$700 billion. The service of this debt is more than \$120 billion, which exposes the development process in the Third World countries to arrest and setback, and involves negative repercussions on the economies of the industrialized countries themselves because of the closer and closer dependency that characterizes relations between the two sides. That is what the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury admitted when he declared to Congress that the drop in the transfers of currency to the developing countries amounting to \$13 billion over the last three years, will be reflected in a slowing of exports from the industrialized countries of around \$35 to \$40 billion and a reduction of their GNP of from 0.6 to 1%.

And since the volume of debt has brought about severe suffocation in several Third World countries, leading in some cases to a paralysis of their development efforts, it might be that commercial, financial and economic cooperation among Third World countries at the horizontal level would be one of the most effective ways to reduce their dependency on foreign credits and to achieve their independence with regard to freeing the resources necessary to fulfill development goals -- taking into account the social and economic specificities as well as the political situations and trying to improve the conditions of exchange, based on mutual interests and guaranteeing the promotion and diversification of production in the developing countries.

But this requires the construction of a new order for energy security, with all its implications: namely the preservation of energy itself, the development of alternate energies, the use of oil in the areas organically linked to the national economies of the oil-exporting countries, and action aimed at developing the capacities of the exporting countries themselves, in order to lay the basis of a diversified and lasting production.

One of the conditions for the success of this operation is also that the developing countries should be assured of benefitting from technology, especially advanced technology.

All of this requires, in the final analysis -- but can it be achieved in our time? -- solving the contradiction between the staggering figures for military expenditures and the enormous needs created by the high population growth we are witnessing in the world, as well as by the dangers resulting from the destruction of the environment, particularly in the Third World.

Mr. President,

The Arab states are fully conscious of the need for a coherent solution to the problems of development and human progress. The documents of common Arab action clearly show this. Indeed, the Arab Economic Action Charter, and the Arab Common Economic Action Strategy adopted by the Amman summit meeting in 1980 both stipulate that man is the artisan and the goal of development. Likewise, all the Arab documents emphasize the primary nature of human development, which is placed right after national security in the order of priorities, because of its implications on the nutritional, technological, and cultural levels.

Finally, I would like to underline the fact that we must not ignore the importance of national responsibility in defining a policy on population and development that can guarantee the wellbeing of people, just as we must not neglect international responsibility in the use of world resources for development purposes.

I wish this conference every success. May our efforts take place under the sign of the call for a prosperous Arab society, a better human society, living in peace and devoting its efforts to bringing about a surplus of wellbeing, of social justice between individuals, as among peoples.

Address

By His Excellency Mr. Habib Chatti
 Secretary-General
 of the Organization of the Islamic Conference
 at the opening of the
 Arab Parliamentary Symposium
 for the Study of Development and Population Problems

BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHEEM

Peace and blessings be upon our lord
 Muhammed, Seal of the Prophets and
 the most honoured of the Apostles, his
 family, his companions and his followers.

It gives me great pleasure to address this Symposium on the cherished land of Tunisia, a symposium held in pursuance of one of the recommendations of the Parliamentarians World Symposium on Population and Development held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in August 1979, and in accordance with an agreement between the World Parliamentarians Committee on Population and Development and the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies, for the organization of an Arab Parliamentary Symposium to study the problems of development and population in the Arab World. We are proud to be in the midst of a number of representatives of international and regional organizations, and an elite of parliamentarians, economists and scientists concerned with the problems of development and family welfare who are gathered here today.

It is my privilege to extend, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, my heartiest greetings and best wishes to this select group of researchers and scientists who are participating in the Symposium. The OIC takes great interest in this Symposium since 22 of its Members are Arab States.

I would also like to express my profound thanks to the organizers who have made such excellent arrangements for this meeting. In this connection, I would like to particularly commend my brother Prime Minister Mohammed Mzali for his untiring and fruitful efforts to promote all round development of his country to attain progress and prosperity for the Tunisian society. I might also recall that, before assuming the office of Prime Minister, Mr. Mzali was well-known for his special interest in the fields of education, thought and scientific research, as well as for encouraging the revival of the ancient Arab-Islamic culture.

Similarly, I pay tribute to the efforts of my brother and dear friend Mr. Mahmoud Messaadi, Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, who has devoted his life to the promotion of the Tunisian people in all fields for gradual advancement towards development and a decent life. Allow me also to pay homage to the great humanitarian role assumed by our distinguished sister Minister Fathia Mzali, Member of the World Parliamentary Council on Population and Development, and to her well-known dedication to the happiness and harmony of the Tunisian family.

The hosting of this important Symposium by Tunisia is an expression of the noble spirit and lofty principles instilled in the sons of this cherished country by the Great Builder of Tunisia, the Supreme Combatant, His Excellency, President Habib Bourguiba who has worked unceasingly and untiringly to provide the Tunisian people with all the essentials of work for the realization of the noble goals of happiness set for Tunisia by its Liberator and the driving force behind its revival. Indeed, President Bourguiba has spared no effort to link the authenticity of the past with the present so that Islamic and Arab authenticity may be the main pillar of the Tunisian State.

Dear brothers,

The subject you are discussing today is a vital one since it assumes paramount importance for most communities in our Third World. There is a continuous trend for the population to grow in our time, and this increase generally raises numerous problems for the States in the implementation of their development plans. It also gives rise to various questions about the sufficiency of economic resources in general, and food resources in particular, and on the inter-relation between the so-called overpopulation and the development of resources. This subject has aroused the interest of various bodies including regional and international organizations such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference which has been making significant progress for several years on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic Cooperation among Member States. Such concern has assumed several forms including the establishment of specialized organs, the convening of conferences and symposia and the preparation of research papers and studies.

A report by one of the specialized international organizations has stated that over five hundred million people in the world had been suffering from malnutrition for the past twenty-five years and that this figure has now doubled. These people live in regions which are called "hunger areas" as the individual there does not possess enough food to work, to meet the basic necessities or to fight disease. Most of such areas are located in the African Continent and the Far East.

While the population continues to increase in the Third

World - to which the Arab and Islamic countries belong - there has been no corresponding rise in available resources to meet the needs of the people thereby leading to decline in living standards. Governments are trying their utmost to remedy the situation before it gets out of control. Generally speaking, however, the attempts to maintain the present rate of population growth have not had much success in most cases.

Dear brothers,

Development requires an equitable distribution of its own returns for the benefit of all social categories. Failure to guarantee social justice benefits the minority and keeps the majority in privation, which is not the real objective of development. This is one of the major issues which should be examined by your Symposium today.

Some scientists have set about dividing the world into numerous population patterns based on three factors, i.e. population, technological level and economic resources. These patterns include the American, the European, the Brazilian and the Indian examples. The Indian pattern applies to demographic areas which are characterized by a high population rate, combined with the inadequacy of their economic resources in relation to the size of their populations and a technological level which enables them to realize speedy development progress. With the exception of oil-producing States, most of our Arab and Muslim countries fall into this pattern.

Although most human societies have experienced, in some stages of their recent history, a higher increase in population than in resources and a shortage or a lack of technological know-how, which have prevented the advancement of the population to a good living standard, such societies have never increased in size at such a rate as the present one. The gap widened considerably at the turn of the century between the States which had achieved technological development and those unable to rid themselves of underdevelopment. This problem has become more acute as technical underdevelopment has made the poor people still poorer while technical supremacy had further widened the gap between developed and underdeveloped States. This is all the more true because technology, as of last decade, has started developing at such an unprecedented pace that the European pattern, for instance, is regarded as backward in comparison with the American pattern: Add to this that the population growth within poor peoples has led to a sharp depletion of resources which, in turn, has compounded the difficulty of the attempt to raise their standard of living and develop their societies.

Dear brothers,

Human communities, from the beginning of time, have resorted to various methods to curb population growth with the aim of ensuring a better life to their citizens. It is therefore

not surprising that most States nowadays are pursuing a so-called "population policy," a technical phrase which is generally associated with the programmes of family planning or birth control and also applied to other developed States which are concerned, for specific reasons, to increase their populations the natural way or through encouragement of immigration.

It is well-known that Islam has not omitted this aspect. It has addressed itself to both the religious and the secular questions, and defined both the social and the economic relations. Islam concerned itself with constructive population and cultural development. It called for production and creativity and conferred respect and appreciation on work. But first and foremost, it cared for man by honouring him and raising his position. Islamic Shari'ah had laid down clear provisions and teachings that safeguard man's faith as well as his person, his mind, his children, his honour and his property.

The attitude of Islam towards population growth is naturally consistent with its stand on all subjects relating to man's life in general. It is an attitude of harmony and balance. Indeed, the so-called "under-population" (or population scarcity) is likely to limit the development operation and its efficacy in view of the lack, in this case, of cadres and manpower. As regards "overpopulation" (i.e. a population size above the appropriate level for development), it is likely to prevent the inhabitants from enjoying the wealth of their country in view of the population rise at a pace which deprives a part of them from the opportunities of work, production, creation and decent living.

Islam has called on man to ensure his prosperity in this world while working for the hereafter. It has also called for the realization of a better life in honour of man whose status has been elevated by Islamic Shari'ah and who is considered by Islam as the deputy of God Almighty on earth.

The Most-Exalted has said: "I am placing on the earth one that shall be My duty," (Surah of the Cow). He has also said: "He has subjected to you what the heavens and the earth contain; all is from Him" (Surah of Kneeling). "We have bestowed blessings on Adam's children and carried them by land and sea. We have provided them with good things and exalted them above many of Our creatures." (Surah of the Night Journey); "and he exclaimed, "Would that my people knew how gracious my Lord has been to me, how highly He has exalted me!" (Surah of Ya Sin). "And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam," they all prostrated themselves except Satan, who refused," (Surah of Ta Ha).

Islamic Shari'ah has exhorted man to work and produce, and has regarded his effort to earn a living and to promote development and prosperity as the best kind of worship. The

story goes that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, one day, while bidding farewell to one of his provincial governors, asked him: "what would you do if you catch a thief?" "-- I would cut off his hand, he answered--". Then, said Omar, "if I came across one of your people who was hungry or unemployed, Omar would cut off your hand. God had made us His deputies over men, Omar added, to allay their hunger, and to provide them with clothing and a profession..." Let us consider here how the Second Caliph summed up the responsibility of the ruler in facilitating the affairs of the Ummah so as to secure for it a decent and dignified life.

The need to provide employment opportunities is thus addressed clearly and it can only be met through job creation and investment. Furthermore, there is no room for unemployment in Muslim society for it is a cause of evil.

Dear brothers,

Islam, apart from the obligations and prohibitions prescribed to Muslims, has permitted or rather urged Muslims to consider and work hard on their temporal affairs in keeping with the changing conditions and the law of development.

In this vast framework, Islam has called for the pursuit of learning. It has also called for the acquisition of knowledge even at the cost of travelling to the remotest parts of the world. Indeed, it has made the quest for knowledge an obligation for every Muslim. Through knowledge, the Muslim realizes the greatness of the Creator in His creation and thus enhances his faith and promotes his understanding. With the flourishing of thought and science, culture achieves its splendour, progress is realized and prosperity prevails. This is precisely what Islam achieved during its golden age when it presented to mankind the greatest civilization ever known.

Islam, in this framework, does not feel uneasy about the modern concept of family planning, if such planning is in the interest of the individuals and groups of Islamic society. However, such planning does not imply in any way encouragement to the reduction of births in a way that harms the Ummah. It only means procreation to such an extent that does not overburden the Ummah or hamper its development efforts. And this is in keeping with what we said earlier on the harmony and balance sought by Islam in all aspects of human life.

As Muslims we must consider the subject of family planning as a method to help us solve the problems of development and population growth, through an Islamic view based on the Holy Quran and the Holy Sunnah of the Prophet. For this purpose, we must keep in mind, while implementing the programmes of family planning, the need of the Ummah for higher and middle cadres and for labour to run its affairs.

While implementing such programmes, we must also base our action on accurate studies showing the economic and social capacity of the country to take in an appropriate size of the population, without excessive restraints or lack thereof. In this way, we can avoid, on the one hand, the excessive population rise which leads to widespread unemployment with its attendant dangers, and, on the other, the decrease of the population below a level which guarantees the availability of the necessary cadres for the Ummah's progress and prosperity, thus striking a balance between material and spiritual development.

It is the right of any Arab and Islamic State to draw up the plan for comprehensive development suiting its requirements and fulfilling the aspirations of its people. In so doing, this State must take into account the need to maintain interdependence, solidarity and cooperation within the Arab and Muslim Ummah and the obligation it has, as a member of the Ummah, to coordinate its work with brotherly States with the aim of ensuring complementarity of resources at the level of the desired development. Through such coordination which, by the grace of God, will lead to integration, our countries will be able to make a big stride on the path to progress and revival.

May Allah guide your steps and crown your work with success. He hears all and answers all.

ARAB PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION
TUNIS, MAY 8-11, 1984

Address by Mr. Pio-Carlo Terenzio
Secretary-General of the Interparliamentary Union

Mr. President,

In the name of the Interparliamentary Union, I am pleased to salute the Parliament and the Tunisian Authorities, and in particular to thank President Messaadi, who was kind enough to invite me to attend this conference. I also greet the delegations from the Arab parliaments, who are all members and friends of our organization.

I would first like to assure you that the Interparliamentary Union cannot fail to follow with the greatest interest the efforts of the Arab states and parliaments with regard to development and population, and the attention given to this conference by various United Nations bodies, for three reasons.

First, because the problems of development are a priority sector of activity for the Interparliamentary Union, which each year discusses one or more aspects of these during its statutory conferences encompassing all of its 102 member parliaments. In addition, over the last few years we have organized and will continue to organize, in cooperation with the competent United Nations organizations whose efforts we support, interparliamentary conferences of a technical and specialized nature, generally regional and always directed toward action, on topics such as population, childhood, health and employment, in collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and ILO. Africa is a continent that particularly holds the Union's attention in that regard, and we are thus cooperating more and more closely there with the official regional interparliamentary organizations, that is with the Union of African Parliaments and the Arab Interparliamentary Union, whose representatives I am pleased to greet.

Second, because the Union has given and continues to give special attention to population problems, first on the occasion of the Bucharest Conference, whose World Action Plan it supported, then by co-sponsoring with UNFPA the Colombo Conference in 1979, by organizing, again with UNFPA, the African Interparliamentary Conference on Population in Nairobi in July 1981, and by systematically dealing with population problems in the framework of different development topics. In the framework of the Mexico Conference, the Interparliamentary Union once again dealt with world population problems last month in Geneva, where, after a discussion attended by hundreds of parliamentarians, during which more than 80

delegates spoke, it adopted a resolution which is at your disposal and which gives the Parliaments' support to the United Nations Conference. In addition, the Interparliamentary Union cooperated with the Union of African Parliaments, which reviewed these problems last September in Mogadishu and last March in Algiers, and which has just adopted a realistic and substantial resolution on population growth and economic development on this continent.

Third, we are following this Conference with great interest, because the Interparliamentary Union is convinced of the fact that a great many questions, particularly with regard to economic and social development, can be effectively dealt with only by simultaneous and combined action at the governmental and parliamentary levels, and because such a conviction is the basis of the support given to the goals of the United Nations, which is part of the Union's mandate and appears in Article 1 of our Statutes.

What I have just said concerning the Interparliamentary Union's action and policy with regard to development and population leads me to note that my organization is increasingly concerned by the initiatives and activities pursued in the same areas by interparliamentary associations that have been set up outside the Interparliamentary Union and the official regional Interparliamentary Unions. We do not understand the encouragement given to these associations by certain UN bodies which would themselves be hard put to it to accept that inter-governmental bodies having the same goals and duplicating their activities should be set up outside the United Nations system.

On April 7, the Interparliamentary Union, which represents all our members, once again unanimously stressed these concerns in a resolution entitled "Coordination and Effectiveness of Interparliamentary Action," in which the Council reaffirmed the Union's mission as the special framework for the Interparliamentary Union, and drew the attention of the national groups and bodies of the United Nations to the necessity of making sure that initiatives in the realm of inter-parliamentary action are coordinated within the Union.

All of this leads to the conclusion that the Interparliamentary Union will be happy to collaborate with the Arab Interparliamentary Union and the Union of African Parliaments, as well as with the competent bodies of the United Nations for all future actions concerning development and population in the Arab countries and in Africa. Therefore, we are placing our discussions and recommendations on the subject at the disposal of your delegations, convinced that you will

be kind enough to consider them.

It is with this goal, after consultation with our Executive Committee, that I am present among you, responding to the kind invitation of President Messaadi, and I wish your deliberations every success.

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE TO THE
ARAB PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION

People everywhere want a better world not only for themselves but for their children. This natural aspiration is a significant force for economic development. It is increasingly clear, however, that there can be no sustained development without an understanding of population questions. The relationship of population to a nation's economy and to the availability of resources will be a critical element in the determination of the material quality of life that future generations will enjoy.

The principles of national sovereignty and individual freedom of choice are central to most population planning. In Arab countries particular emphasis is placed on the need to take full account of the resources available for family support in determining family size. This is one of the cornerstones of the World Population Plan of Action which was adopted at the World Population Conference held at Bucharest in 1974. It is of great relevance in this region since the population of Arab countries is rising. The annual growth rate has gone from 2.71 per cent in 1970-75 to an estimated annual rate of 3.06 per cent in 1980-85. More than 50 per cent of the total population in the region is urban and this figure is expected to approach 70 per cent by the end of the century. An FAO study indicates that few Arab countries will be able by that time to guarantee an adequate food supply on a national basis. These circumstances clearly impose a need for prudent yet energetic planning and leadership.

In August, the nations of the world will meet in Mexico City at the International Conference on Population to work together in support of rational population policies. The World Population Plan of Action will be reviewed and up-dated. Your work here this week will be important from the regional perspective and can also contribute significantly to international efforts for sensible population planning. It is with a profound sense of the timeliness and relevance of your efforts that I greet you on the occasion of this conference and wish you success in your deliberations.

MESSAGE TO
THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF ARAB PARLIAMENTARIANS' FORUM
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Takeo Fukuda, Chairman
Global Committee of
Parliamentarians on
Population and Development

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to have this opportunity to send greetings to you at the first conference of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development today. I wish I could be personally present in Tunis to deliver this message.

Before I address the main theme of the conference, I would like to refer to the crises mankind is facing today, as they have ramifications for population and development issues.

These crises are the most serious threats to world peace since the end of World War II.

One of the crises is the East-West confrontation, particularly the tension between the U.S. and Soviet Union and their race to buildup nuclear arms. As you know, the resources required for this race are so enormous and typically entail such huge national budget deficits that the arms race has become a major factor leading the world economy into the greatest global recession of the past 50 years.

Another crisis is the North-South issue. The income gap between countries in the North and South has been ever expanding. While many reasons have been given for this growing disparity, there is one way it can be mitigated. That is, if we can only solve the East-West confrontation, the massive military expenditures can be diverted partially to international public works investment and partially to direct socio-economic development in the developing countries. This could contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world.

Moreover, this will enable a reduction of military expenditures in the developing world itself, which are said to almost equal official development assistance being provided by the advanced world. This, in turn, will enable a considerable amount of resources to be diverted to socio-economic development in these countries.

I repeat that the greatest threat to world peace is the East-West confrontation. By working to remedy this confrontation, therefore, major progress on North-South problems can be made. I

feel that this is the most effective path we can take.

Next, I would like to turn to the fundamental and tenacious problems of another dimension.

I refer to this problem of harmonizing the rapidly rising world population with the finite resources necessary for mankind's survival, such as energy, food, land, water and the need for environmental balance. This need for harmonization leads directly to the issue of population and development. As all of you know, it is not possible for us to survive when the equilibrium collapses between the growth of population and the expansion of these essential survival resources.

This obvious logic has long been ignored. And this neglect has too often been justified on grounds of religion, ideology or various customs.

Only the national government of each country can rectify this inattention by educating the public that a stable and prosperous society can be realized only if the vicious circle of "population and poverty" can be interrupted.

And I am convinced that members of the legislative branch, who are more closely linked with the public and who have a broader and freer perspective than the executive branch of the government, should take the leadership in this field.

I am gratified that there are over 40 countries which have formed a national parliamentarians group on "population and development" and that international stages have been set for these groups to cooperate and learn from each other.

Already, in addition to this Arab group, regional conferences have been held in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe to build up the foundation for peace, stability, and prosperity of the world.

I have no doubt that this Arab Parliamentarians' Forum on Population and Development will cast a great light upon the future of mankind. Through your dialogue and actions, a basis for stable peace and prosperity can be created with a vision which reflects the difficult situation of the Arab world.

Finally, let me express my heartfelt wish for the success of the conference as well as for the health and happiness of each of you attending.

Tunisian Republic
Chamber of Deputies

Global Committee of Parliamentarians on
Population and Development

ARAB PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

ON DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION

TUNIS 8-11 MAY 1984

Opening Address by
Mr. Mohammad Mzali, Prime Minister

At the Arab Parliamentary Conference
On Population and Development

(Tunis, 8 May 1984)

Mr. Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies,

Respected Representatives of the Global Committee of
Parliamentarians,

Mr. Secretary-General of League of Arab States,

Mr. Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like, on behalf of our Supreme
Combatant, His Excellency, President Habib Bourguiba, to thank you for
your choice of our country to hold this important conference, in
preparation for a great international event: the International
Conference on Population, which will be held during the summer of this
year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

No one among us disputes the great importance of the cause you
are convening for today.

Population and development issues have been the subject of
several world gatherings, most prominent of which was the World
Population Conference held in Bucharest, 1974.

The Bucharest Conference had special importance among previous
international population gatherings, due to its comprehensiveness, its
profound analysis of the population problems, its clarification of
various other dimensions.

The most important document the Bucharest Conference adopted
was the World Population humanity's concerns for resolving it.

Your meeting today is held at a time when the international
community is preparing to reconvene in the summer in Mexico City to
evaluate the countries' achievements in implementation of the World Plan
of Action adopted at the Bucharest Conference, and to review the Plan in
the light of the developments that took place in world population and
socio-economic conditions and variables over the last ten years.

Your meeting occurs nearly one month after the Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab World in Amman. The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the Executive Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Western Asia participated in the organization of that conference.

The resolution of Global Parliamentarians to hold an International Parliamentary Gathering in Mexico City following the United Nations International Conference on Population, 15-16 August 1984, may reflect the importance Parliamentarians give to population and development issues, and the role they were and are playing in improving awareness of these issues, and in participating to resolve them on the legislative and political levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By the convening of the Mexico International Conference on Population, the Arab nation's population will be about 184 million, distributed on 13.6 million square kilometers, which means an estimated population density of 13 inhabitants per square kilometer.

The density, which appears comparatively low, does not reflect the actual population pressure on land and resources in the Arab World. This is due to the vast uninhabited desert lands in the Arab countries. Nearly 99 per cent of Egypt's population, for example, live on a strip of land that does not exceed 4 per cent of the total land of Egypt. Inhabited land in Kuwait does not exceed 6 per cent of the total land, which makes population density in this sister country reach nearly 5,000 per square kilometer in the area of the capital.

The comparison between countries like Egypt or Tunisia on one hand, and any Arab oil producing country on the other, illustrates the relationship between population and socio-economic conditions in the Arab World. Hence, the difference in perspective each Arab country has for the population problem.

These variations in the relationship between population and development within the Arab World led to population movement among Arab countries, caused mainly by people seeking employment. These migrations resulted in enhancing development opportunities in the countries concerned and helped them draw closer in their population policies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Population growth rates in the Arab World continue to be of the highest in the world. The average annual population growth rate is estimated at about 3 per cent. Each Arab country looks at this issue

from a completely different perspective. Some of us view these rates as an obstacle to our development efforts, and believe that, while waiting for the crystalization of Arab integration, appropriate policies should be developed to reduce these rates, including policies aiming at birth control. Other Arab countries are satisfied with their population growth rates, or even find them less than the level required for the proper investment of their resources and the quick start of a gradual replacement of foreign labour.

It is natural that our perspective of the population issue differs according to socio-economic conditions prevalent in each country.

But population growth rates, which we view differently, represent only one dimension to the population issue.

The other two dimensions to this issue are population characteristics and geographical distribution. These two dimensions still cause problems in almost all countries in the area, problems that can be solved only through mutual efforts within the process of socio-economic development.

One of the population characteristics in the Arab world is the young population structure. Although there are some positive aspects of this characteristic, it involves high dependency ratio, which is considered by many as an obstacle to development. Instead of channelling financial surplus for development, such surplus is wasted in satisfying the growing population needs.

Our countries have included, within their development policies, all plans and programmes to satisfy their populations' needs. The expansion of education throughout the Arab World has undoubtedly affected population characteristics. Education has helped to improve capabilities and skills required for development. Improvement of health and medical facilities has had a great effect in reducing mortality levels, especially among infants and children, and in increasing life expectancy at birth. Public facilities have improved and new work opportunities have emerged to meet the increase in demand for employment.

The issues of population distribution, characteristics, and the satisfaction of population needs continue to face officials in Arab countries with challenges that need combined efforts.

An important issue in this regard is the high illiteracy rate (nearly 42 per cent), which is much higher than the world percentage (29 per cent), or the percentage in developed countries (2 per cent). Other issues prevailing in many of our countries are the lack of skilled labour and professionals, and the high rates of unemployment and disguised unemployment.

One of the health issues is that the mortality rate, especially among infants and children, is still one of the highest in the world, in spite of efforts undertaken to reduce it. It exceeds 100 per thousand in the Arab World as a whole, while life expectancy at birth in nine Arab countries has not yet reached the goal of 50 years set for poor countries by the World Population Plan of Action.

One of the new population issues is urbanization, which has increased enormously during the last decade. Urbanization is welcome if it emanates from the expansion of facilities to rural areas, but in most cases it is an outcome of population migration from villages to urban centers, causing congestion in big cities and in capitals, and putting pressure on facilities and public services. In addition, urbanization causes erosion and reduces the role of the land as an agricultural resource.

To secure food for the Arab population has become the most important issue facing our countries' officials today.

In spite of all efforts made to improve the performance of the agricultural sector and to satisfy population needs for food, data indicates that food production in the Arab World has not kept up with the increase in demand for it. Arab countries have started to import food products in large quantities, which has caused pressure on their balance of payments and limited their ability to finance development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These important issues are the core of the subject you are going to examine in this conference. They underscore the necessity of investigating population issues in a comprehensive way, and analyzing their strong ties to development.

Taking the population factor into consideration when making development programmes and plans in the Arab countries helps to clarify these challenges and to make programmes for their resolutions.

Although reaction is bound to differ from one Arab country to the other in dealing with population problems, there should be no misunderstanding of the difference between population policy and family planning. Such misunderstanding might prevent us from making a clear and planned population policy with due consideration to its interrelationship with the development process. Population policy is deeper and more comprehensive than the family planning concept.

Several Arab countries implement family planning as a means to change population growth rates, to reduce the burden of development, to decrease population pressure, and to preserve family structure and the

dignity of the human being. The ultimate goal of these countries is to improve the material and spiritual conditions of the Arab individuals. To reach this goal, other Arab countries made it easy for couples to control their own reproduction aiming not only at reducing population growth rates as a main target, but also at child spacing which improves the health of the mother and child and enhances the welfare of all family members.

The Amman Declaration, adopted at the Regional Conference on Population and Development held in Jordan's capital late last March, emphasized that birth control is a human right for couples, guaranteed by international conventions, and that Arab countries should secure that right by making available information and family planning means based on freedom of choice.

It is recognized today that population variables are affected by the process of development. The expansion of education; the improvement of health care so as to reduce child mortality; the covering of the largest number of citizens possible with a social security blanket; and the improvement of the status of women, including their participation in development efforts, will create awareness and willingness for birth control. This will accelerate the population maturity many Arab countries are aspiring to.

It could be said that improving the capabilities of a country to solve its development problems ultimately helps to resolve population issues, whether they deal with fertility behaviour of couples, immigration and population movement problems, or varied population characteristics.

Therefore it is necessary to draw your attention to two important issues:

The first issue deals with the injustice that still characterizes international economic relations.

During the decade 1974-1984, international economic conditions went through a severe crisis, which resulted in an increase in developing countries' debts and a reduction in development aid. All that in turn limited the development capabilities of poor countries and was an obstacle to their efforts to resolve their population and social problems.

International reports indicate that world production of food is sufficient for world population, but, as Mr. Somaa, Director of Food and Agriculture Organization, said in 1982, there are half a billion people still suffering from hunger, disease and death because they are essentially poor to a degree that does not permit them to buy what is abundant and wasted in rich countries.

The second issue deals with Arab cooperation aimed at controlling population and development problems in the Arab World.

The Declaration adopted by the Amman Conference on Population and development late last March indicated that it is possible to reduce or eliminate population problems in the Arab countries if they are considered within their national dimensions. This will require an Arab population policy that takes into account present conditions and tries to solve national population problems within a comprehensive framework for development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Arab World is rich in human and material resources. Effort should be made towards their ideal utilization, within an integrated context aiming at the improvement of the Arab individual and his economic, social, and cultural levels.

The character of national economic work, and the strategy for mutual Arab economic efforts, adopted by the eleventh Arab Summit Conference held in Amman in 1980, form the best framework for this common task. Arab parliaments should help implement this task.

Oil-producing Arab countries participated effectively in helping other countries in the region to meet the needs for development.

However problems the Arab nation encounters are related primarily to modern civilization. There are still large areas which are ripe for close cooperation regarding these problems, such as facilitating population movement to insure ideal use of available resources, pursuing complementary rural development efforts, intensifying cooperation in agricultural investment aiming at securing food to all Arab citizens, creating new methods to improve cooperation in the area of vocational education and training, and mastering ways of technological innovation. All these areas could attract your attention in this conference, not to convince you, because there is already agreement on these areas in most cases, but to put these areas to work.

The needs of Arab individuals are not only material. The suitable climate for individual and public freedom, the participation of every Arab citizen in forming and making decisions, the improvement of status of women and their participation in public life and in development tasks, and justice in income distribution, all these needs are part of the development process in its wide-ranging and correct sense. They serve finally the population issue in its varied dimensions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tunisia's conviction of the importance of population factor in development stems from the importance this factor had when we were forming our six development plans. These plans prepared for programmes and projects aiming to resolve different aspects of this problem.

Tunisia has achieved a lot of progress in socio-economic development. One of the indicators of this progress is that investment today is estimated at nearly 30 per cent of the national production. In Tunisia 75 per cent of the finances needed for development is self supplied. Economic growth reached 7.1 per cent annually during the second decade, compared with 4.6 per cent in the first decade.

Regarding the social field, in addition to the effort made to expand education, Tunisia has achieved a large increase in work opportunities. The annual rate of this increase tripled in comparison with the first decade. The average annual income rate increased by 4 per cent, compared with 1.8 per cent in the first decade. This meant a decrease in poverty. The rate of population below poverty level decreased from 73 per cent in the early sixties to 21.4 per cent in 1980.

Since 1973 Tunisia has established rural development programmes which have helped a great deal in improving socio-economic conditions in rural areas. In 1984 work began in integrated rural development programmes, which support the old programmes, help stabilize rural population, and improve their socio-economic conditions.

There has been a great improvement in the health field, the mortality rate has decreased from 14 per thousand in the first decade to 9 per thousand in the second decade, due to eliminating tropical diseases and the enormous decrease in infectious diseases and child mortality.

This does not mean that we have attained what we hoped for in all areas of development. Creating job opportunities for a constantly increasing population one of the biggest challenges we still encounter in spite of the progress we have achieved in this area.

We believe that controlling population growth can be an element in helping to solve this and other problems in the long run. The natural population growth rate in Tunisia is estimated at 2.5-2.6 per cent. This is far above what population replacement requires or what our country's resources can afford.

Family planning policy in Tunisia does not aim only at birth control but at child spacing. While this policy reduces population growth rates, it does not neglect human and health elements. The core of the policy is to give the couples their legal right to make the decision

concerning the number of children to have. This changes fertility behaviour from "instinct" to "responsible" choice. I believe that children who are born with the responsible choice of their parents will get a greater amount of care and attention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our duty at this moment to mention what Tunisia, the Arab state, owes, in all these fields, to the man who liberated her from all kinds of chains, the man who made her glorious and secured constant progress and prosperity. We should mention here with all respect and esteem the favours President Habib Bourguiba has bestowed on generations of Tunisians. He created political stabilization, economic growth, and social progress for this nation. He taught his people how to increase national wealth, and how to distribute its fruits with utmost justice. He was always a pioneer, helping human beings and liberating society.

The Bourguiban Thought considers man a goal and a means of development at the same time. He did not exploit man, pretending to bring him happiness. He did not try to sacrifice the present generation for the happiness of the next one. This humanitarian view was clear in the efforts made continuously to improve the nation's conditions, especially those of women. The Bourguiban regime tried to liberate women in order to establish a balanced society, where men and women have equal rights and share responsibilities within the family and society. This would lead to a better society, country and humanity at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The greatest danger for the Arab nation is the compulsory migration forced upon the Arab population in Palestine. This takes crude forms, such as using new methods of terrorism, threats, and making it difficult for Arab citizens to work, or even live.

This compulsory migration is essentially a resettlement operation, aiming at usurping Arab land forever and changing its demographic characteristics.

His Excellency President Bourguiba warned on several occasions against the grave danger of this issued.

During the Tenth Arab Summit Conference held in Tunis in November 1977, he stressed the fact that the struggle between Arabs and Zionism ought to be considered a struggle of civilizations where essential rights cannot be given up. Zionist hegemony cannot be condoned, and the act of aggression cannot be recognized.

There should be clear planning for short and long term goals to allow the Arab nation to win the challenges facing it, to improve its human capabilities, and to use its material resources. This will lead the Arab nation to flourish economically, to advance socially, and to excel in technology and modern science. This will enable the Arab nation to liberate itself from economic and political dependence, and to master its own affairs.

No Arab country can win victory in this battle by itself, as long as there are Arab countries which suffer from backwardness and poverty. Therefore, we should be aware of the need to complement each other and to cooperate in all matters of development for all Arab peoples. Development within one nation should treat all categories of society equally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I trust that your task in this conference will help in crystalizing the common Arab stand towards the issue of population and development. Your efforts will, no doubt, enrich the discussion and the forming of recommendations in the International Conference on Population in Mexico, and the International Parliamentary Gathering which will be held in that city too. I have great hopes that Arab parliamentarians will try, within their respective countries, to form a population and development policy for the Arab World that takes into consideration national directives and the need for Arab integration in these fields.

Once again I extend my thanks to you, and wish you success in your work and a pleasant stay in your country, Tunisia.