

## ICPD+10 OR BUCHAREST +30?<sup>1</sup>

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Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank the Secretariat of the United Nations, particularly the Population Division and its Director, Joseph Chamie, for inviting me to address this august assembly. Needless to say, I consider this a great honor. Having served this Commission some three decades ago, I also feel, in doing this, a deep sense of both nostalgia and history.

This is the year of ICPD + 10, so my first thought was to make this the title of my statement. But then I thought that it did not all start with ICPD ten years ago, it actually started with Bucharest 30 years ago. This reminded me of a conversation I had in Bucharest in 1974 with the late Alfred Sauvy, one of the great pioneers of economic demography, while we were waiting for the opening of the World Population Conference. I told Mr. Sauvy that when I was an undergraduate at the American University of Beirut in the mid-50s, the professor teaching us Middle Eastern economics told us that the limit of Arabian Gulf oil reserves was 30 years. Some ten years later, in 1967, while giving a short course in Kuwait, I attended a lecture on the economy of the region where the speaker assured us that the limit of oil reserves in the Gulf was, again, 30 years. And that morning in 1974, another ten years later, I read in the newspaper an article on the same subject where the author stated emphatically that the limit of oil reserves in the Gulf was, yet again, 30 years. What, I asked, did Mr. Sauvy think of this paradox? And Mr. Sauvy replied: "30 years is not the limit of oil reserves, it is the limit of human imagination." Remembering these wise words, I decided to stretch the title of my statement and make it: ICPD + 10 or Bucharest +30? Just to be on the safe side, I added a little question mark at the end.

Indeed, Bucharest, I do believe, constituted a main breakthrough in the work of the international community on population outside the specific area of formal demography. There had been, before Bucharest, two international conferences on population---in Rome in 1954 and Belgrade in 1964---but they were both meetings of experts, organized by the United Nations in cooperation with the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. The Population Division of the United Nations had made great contributions in the field of formal demography, particularly under the late John Durand, a demographers' demographer, and one of the spiritual fathers of population studies with whom I had the privilege to serve. Lest we forget, the Population Division was the leading pioneer in formal demography at that time, and its work in this area was instrumental in the establishment of demography as a field of study in university curricula. Among its contributions were its first three manuals of demography, its model life tables, its work on stable population models, in addition, of course, to its now classic

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contributions to the understanding of the determinants and consequences of population trends and to the demography of developing countries. But the Division never had a population policy program, or a population policy section, and was not authorized to work in this field. It was left for another Population Division Chief, Milos Macura, a man with a sharp political sense and a good deal of imagination and courage, to successfully negotiate the holding of the first international *intergovernmental* conference, the World Population Conference, in Bucharest in 1974. This was decided by the Population Commission in 1969 and approved by the Economic and Social Council in 1970<sup>3</sup>. It took two more years for the Population Commission and the ECOSOC to recommend that a Draft World Population Plan of Action be placed on the agenda of the Conference. In 1971, the Population Commission's work program contained, for the first time, a section on "population policy" and Milos Macura created the first Population Policy Section in the Population Division and brought me back from Berkeley to head it<sup>4</sup>.

One of the first tasks undertaken in the preparation of the draft of the World Population Plan of Action was to review all United Nations resolutions, decisions and conventions for various elements of population policy that may have existed in them. This review eventually formed the base line from which the plan of action sought to advance.

In developing this basic document, few things became clear:

First, that, up to that point in time, the United Nations had dealt with population policy issues in bits and pieces and in a generally very timid fashion. In its 1969 report, the Population Commission actually expressed its "regret... that, at the beginning of the Second [United Nations] Development Decade, there still was an obvious lack of a global strategy in the sector of population..." Indeed, in its resolution on the International Development Strategy of the Second Development Decade in 1970, the General Assembly tried to introduce a paragraph on population policy. After about two weeks of negotiations and deliberations, only a bland paragraph could be agreed upon. It stated: "Those developing countries which consider that their rate of population growth hampers their development will adopt measures *which they deem necessary in accordance with their concept of development*. Developed countries, *consistent with their national policies*, will upon request provide support through the supply of *means of family planning* and further research. International organizations concerned will continue to provide, *when appropriate*, the assistance that may be requested by interested Governments. *Such support or assistance will not be a substitute for other forms of development assistance*." [Emphasis added]. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment that took place in Stockholm in 1972 did not offer much help either. It made no significant recommendations regarding the relationship between population and the environment. Instead, it recommended that the Secretary General of the United Nations "ensure that during the preparations for the World Population Conference, special attention shall be given to population concerns as they relate to the environment and, more particularly, to the environment of human settlements." It was against this background that the Secretariat embarked on developing a plan of action, laying out a

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<sup>3</sup> ECOSOC resolution 1484 (XLVIII).

<sup>4</sup> ESA/P/AC.3/4, 10 June, 1973.

comprehensive international population strategy. For many, in those days, it looked like a quixotic undertaking.

The second thing that became clear from the document in question was that, until 1969 at least, the Population Commission could not agree on a program of work that went beyond formal demography and into population policy. Thus, in 1967, that is a mere two years before the Population Commission's recommendation to hold the World Population Conference in Bucharest, the Commission's report stated that *some countries* felt "that in the past there had been too great a concentration upon the statistical aspects of demography and their more formal applications, and that it was now necessary to shift the emphasis to economic, social and health aspects of *population growth* in order to achieve a balanced program." [Emphasis added] So it was not the Commission that felt that way but only "some countries" and this had to do, as has already been the case with practically all references to population, mainly with "population growth".

The recommendation of the Commission in 1969 to hold an international intergovernmental conference and the subsequent decision of the Economic and Social Council to hold the World Population Conference in 1974<sup>5</sup> and then to put on its agenda a World Population Plan of Action<sup>6</sup> dealing with various aspects of population policy, was, therefore, a revolutionary development at the time, and initiated what may be called "the second phase" in the work of the international community in the population field, the first phase having been characterized by the major contributions in formal demography and population analysis I already referred to.

The third thing that became clear from this review document, was the idea that population issues were closely related to development. This idea, it became clear then, was gaining an unstoppable momentum and was to dominate international thinking in spite of initial resistance to it. In the 1967 report of the Population Commission it was indicated that "*some members* considered as a matter of concern the possibility that family planning might come to be regarded as a panacea for all population problems... Greater attention must be given to the social and economic factors interrelated with population growth and changes in population characteristics, for family planning programs can contribute best to social and economic progress if they are part of major development efforts in many fields." [Emphasis added ] The close relationship between population and development, as we shall see, dominated the World Population Conference and was one of the overriding characteristics of the World Population Plan of Action. Indeed, it has, consequently, permeated all work of the United Nations family in the field of population. The Population Commission became the Commission on Population and Development, the Cairo conference was named the International Conference on Population and Development and in the resolutions of the United Nations and its specialized agencies it became almost taboo to mention population without following it immediately by the word development.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> ECOSOC resolution 1672 (LII).

The first important document of this second phase in international thinking on population was undoubtedly the World Population Plan of Action. Of all the contributions it made I should like to throw light on only two questions the Plan answered, namely: what is the scope of the field of population and what is the nature of population policies. A good deal of debate took place before and during the conference on these two issues.

There were strong pressures during the preparations of the draft plan of action to restrict its scope to population growth, fertility and family planning. Advocates of this position argued that the major population problem facing the world was population growth, that the reason for this problem is high fertility and that the main means of reducing fertility was family planning. Accordingly, the plan should concentrate on population growth, fertility and family planning, and, if the definition of population is to include, as a matter of compromise, other issues (such as issues relating to internal migration, international migration, population structure and the like) these should be given low priority and placed, preferably, in an annex. To do otherwise, would risk diverting resources from the most important issue to less important or marginal ones. This position was understandable at that time when the population literature was dominated by the doomsday scenario of the Club of Rome report, and by books with titles like “the population bomb” and “famine 1974”. Opposing this view was a majority view that population should be defined broadly and that these other issues of population were as important, if not more important, globally as population growth. This latter view eventually prevailed and, in hindsight at least, this was a fortunate thing. In fact, a survey conducted at the time among all countries members of the United Nations indicated that at least as many countries were interested in formulating policies on population movement (i.e. spatial distribution and international migration) than on fertility and population growth. This survey which has been repeated regularly since then has always given similar results. The World Population Plan of Action, therefore, defined the field of population in such a way as to include: population growth, mortality and morbidity, reproduction, family formation and status of women, population distribution and internal migration, international migration and population structure. In stating its goals and policies on these subjects, it devoted an almost equal number of paragraphs to population growth and reproduction, as it did to population movements, that is, to internal and international migration.

Another subject of great debate at the time had to do with the nature of population policies<sup>7</sup>. The plan of action considered as population policy any measure, direct or indirect, whose principal aim was to affect the above population goals. With regard to fertility reduction, for example, population policy must not, according to the Plan, be restricted to family planning programs and the distribution of contraceptives. While recognizing the diversity of situations, the Plan gave some guidelines as to the type of indirect measures that may be applied, such as the reduction of infant mortality, the full integration of women in the development process, promoting educational opportunities for both sexes, elimination of child labor and child abuse and the promotion of social justice. With regard to internal migration, it warned against the use of direct restrictive

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<sup>7</sup> See, Riad Tabbarah, “Population Policy Issues in International Instruments,” *The Journal of International Law and Economics*, December, 1974.

regulations on movement and recommended such indirect socio-economic measures as the strengthening of networks of small and medium size cities, increasing employment opportunities and other income generating activities in rural areas, making available necessary social services in these areas and establishing modern amenities in them. And in the area of international migration, policies recommended by the Plan of Action included undertaking manpower planning at the national level, undertaking skill training and re-training, assisting migrants to settle and be productive in destination countries, promoting bi-lateral agreements and offering financial and technical assistance to develop policies that aim at keeping citizens of out-migration countries in the service of their countries. All these measures, when they are aimed at affecting population trends, should be considered population policy measures and should, consequently, be the subject of national action and international cooperation in the population field.

What happened since Bucharest on these two fundamental issues?

The International Conference on Population held in Mexico City in 1984, i.e., Bucharest +10, followed, in its recommendations, the outline and concepts found in the World Population Plan of Action. Indeed, the rules of engagement at that conference were explicit: the purpose of the recommendations was the “further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, innovations were kept to a minimum.

The International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, i.e., Bucharest +20, adopted the same definition and scope of population policy but placed the emphasis on certain aspects more than on others. Major attention was placed on the subject covered in Bucharest under the title “reproduction, family formation and the status of women.” Of the 243 recommendations in the Programme of Action that emerged from the Conference, approximately one-third mention women or girls. The “empowerment of women” was considered, in the guiding principles of the Programme of Action, a “cornerstone of population and development-related programmes,” alongside gender equality and equity. The concepts of safe motherhood and safe abortion were introduced. While in the World Population Plan of Action abortion was mentioned only once and in the context of the need to eliminate illegal abortions, it was considered in the Cairo document as a component of reproductive health care, subject to certain conditions. In addition, the Programme of Action emphasized in its policy goals traditionally neglected groups such as persons with disabilities and indigenous populations. Perhaps the greatest innovation of the Cairo Programme of Action was in “the openness and clarity with which numerous sensitive issues have been addressed.”<sup>9</sup> But although the main contribution of the Cairo Programme of Action fell in the area corresponding to reproductive health and the status of women in the Plan of Action, a number of innovations are also found in the other areas, such as population structure, internal migration and international migration. It must be added, that the Commission on Population and Development continued to give emphasis to all aspects of population and the Population Division, under the leadership of Joseph Chamie, another outstanding

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<sup>8</sup> See, United Nations, *Population Consensus at Cairo, Mexico City and Bucharest: an analytical comparison*, New York, 1995, p.1

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

demographer in the tradition of Durand and Macura, has produced pioneering work in international migration and urbanization, as well as fertility, mortality, ageing and other areas of population concern.

With regard to the international funding of population, however, the story since Bucharest has been quite different. The debate 30 years ago regarding the scope of the population field may have been won by those advocating the broader definition, but it did not much affect the structure of international population assistance. On the contrary, the flow of funding to population became almost totally concentrated on one aspect, albeit an important one, namely, the general area of what the World Population Plan of Action called in 1974 “reproduction, family formation and status of women” with a small percentage being devoted to data collection and research. Data on trends in population assistance by category of activity collected in the context of UNFPA/NIDI Resource Flows project database show that, for the category comprising data collection and research, the percentage of total population funds received declined from around 18 per cent in 1995 to around 8 per cent in 2003 while the category comprising reproductive health, family planning and HIV/AIDS rose from 82 per cent to 92 per cent<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, data collected under this program deal only with these two categories because, I believe, a negligible amount of international population funding goes to other population policies and activities particularly those having to do with the various aspects of population movement and population structure. A cursory look at UNFPA assistance indicates that around 75 per cent goes directly to programs classified under reproductive health and related advocacy measures, while an undetermined part of the remaining 25 per cent goes towards data collection and research on the same subject. No significant assistance is given in the areas of population movement and little in population structure. In fact, the International Conference on Population and Development, in discussing resource mobilization for population in its Program of Action, “costed” only the resources needed for implementing the programmes in these two categories, namely, reproductive health (including family planning, maternal health and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases), and the collection and analysis of population data. The Programme of Action only pointed out that “additional resources” would be needed to assist in the development and implementation of policies in other sectors of population, such as population distribution, international migration and population structure and for indirect population policies in health, education, employment and the provision of social services.

It may be argued that the strategy followed since Bucharest to concentrate resources on population issues that are both important and “attractive” to donors, and on population policies that are clear and direct, was the proper strategy to promote international interest, particularly donors’ interest, in the population field. At any rate, the results so far have been quite impressive. The international flow of funds to population has been quite significant. UNFPA budget grew from less than \$1 million before Bucharest to some \$400 million at present. Since ICPD, it has grown by an average of 5 per cent a year,

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations, Commission on Population and Development, thirty-seventh session, “Flow of financial resources for assisting in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development: a 10-year review: Report of the Secretary-General , 9 January, 2004 (E/CN.9/2004/4) p. 15/

more than four times the rate of growth of world population. While the exact impact of this assistance is difficult to gauge, there is no doubt that results, in the areas of action, have been quite significant. However, persisting in this approach much longer runs the risk of dangerously distorting national priorities and permanently narrowing the field of assistance to population, thus marginalizing other important areas of population concern, such as migration and structure, which are not only important for most developing countries but also important for their contribution to sustainable development and international harmony. It also runs the risk of sidelining the use of indirect social and economic measures aimed at achieving population goals and thus isolating population policy from overall socio economic policies of development. If we persist we run the risk of letting funding determine policy instead of the other way around.

Let me give you the example of my country. As you probably know, in 1991 Lebanon came out of a devastating war that had disastrous repercussions on its economy, society, political structure and, of course, demographic conditions. About one third of its population was displaced at one time or another during the war, an estimated one third emigrated and, not least because of the economic difficulties that ensued, heavy emigration, particularly of educated youth, continues to this day. One immediate result of this heavy emigration that is dominated by males of marriageable ages, is that the rates of celibacy among women doubled since before the war for every age group caused mainly by the low availability of mate ratios. This has resulted in a number of unintended social changes and triggered the emigration of single educated women, a phenomenon seen in Lebanon for the first time. The National Population Policy Document, without minimizing the importance of reproductive health and family planning measures, particularly in the poorer areas of the country, placed, among its first priorities, internal migration, particularly forced migration, international migration, particularly the migration of educated youth, and the need to integrate population policies in the overall development process. The flow of funds to population activities, however, remained highly concentrated on reproductive health and family planning with practically no funding going to migration. According to UNFPA data posted on the web<sup>11</sup>, for the period 1997-2001, 92 per cent of regular resources and more than 93 per cent of total resources were to be devoted to reproductive health. The present, better balanced program, however, devotes some 30 per cent of the budget to other areas of population concern but still has practically no funding for the various issues of population movements and minimal funding for issues of population structure. I do not, of course, minimize the positive effect of this assistance on Lebanon. It was instrumental in the development of the national population policy document itself, it was crucial to the great advances made in reproductive health in the country where national indicators on the subject have reached Western standards, it gave critical support to the articulation of means for the further empowerment of women and, through its advocacy program, helped create general awareness and understanding of the importance of population issues in general. But it is time already to give due emphasis to the other population priorities and this can be greatly helped by a change in emphasis at the global level.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.unfpa.org.lb/unfpa\\_leb/country\\_prog.htm](http://www.unfpa.org.lb/unfpa_leb/country_prog.htm)

What I am advocating here is that Bucharest + 30 should see the initiation of what may be called phase 3 in the approach of the international community to population policies and population assistance. Phase one was extremely successful in making the United Nations the leader in the development of formal demography. Phase two saw impressive accomplishments in important aspects of population policy, particularly reproductive health and the empowerment of women and, in general, raised substantially the interest of the international community in population policy, as evidenced by the substantial increase in international funding for population activities. It is now important to direct our attention and energy toward a better alignment of population assistance with national priorities and to giving due weight in international assistance to the other important areas of population concern that did not benefit fairly, or at all, from this assistance so far, and also to the indirect socio-economic measures of population policy that are necessary for achieving population goals in these areas and for integrating population policy in the overall policies of sustainable development. Let me hasten to add that this does not imply a reduction in the resources available for reproductive health and the empowerment of women, as was feared by some at Bucharest. For the pursuit of new population issues and policies that figure high among the development priorities of most countries, if properly explained and promoted, should eventually result in a substantial increase in donors' contributions to population assistance, larger cost-sharing on the part of the receiving countries and bi-lateral donors, and greater economies of scale. The resource pie, in other words, will be considerably enlarged. This, I believe, is a necessary undertaking if we wish to reclaim control over the entire field of population as was laid out by the pioneering representatives of the 137 countries that were present at Bucharest thirty years ago.