

**Statement to the Commission on Population and Development
Acting as Preparatory Committee for the Special Session
of the General Assembly**

As written

**ICPD + 5
Environmental Caucus Statement
March 25, 1999**

Background

The environmental caucus of the ICPD + 5 Prepcom fully supports implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. For this reason, we believe the draft recommendations should fully represent the integrated nature of population and development concerns, especially in regard to the environment. The ICPD + 5 process represents a particular opportunity to deal with the various issues of previous global UN conferences in an integrated way because it deals with “population and development” – a broad, integrated issue area. The tendency to focus on one set of issues at a time is perhaps the easiest way to organize work, but it leads to a subversion of the fact that all aspects of the lives of individuals are integrated. For example, we cannot address access to food, water safety, and migration without addressing the environment as well.

The recommendations should reflect the two-way linkage between environment and population. Population dynamics have caused degradation of biological diversity, air quality, and supply and quality of natural resources. However, the reverse relationship is often overlooked. A degraded environment impacts human health, not only in terms of sufficient life-sustaining natural resources (e.g. water), but also in the connection between reproductive health declines in men and women and environmental pollutants and toxins. Thus, a healthy environment should be a priority when seeking to address human health and welfare.

We would like to make the following specific points:

- 1) Declines in fertility due to impaired reproduction and mortality caused by environmental pollutants (such as toxins and endocrine disrupters), should be a serious concern as a matter of individual health and an indicator of environmental degradation. For example, in Eastern Europe impaired fertility, increase in birth defects and increasing mortality is caused by environmental degradation.
- 2) Governments, multilateral institutions, and civil society should address long-term health effects due to environmental pollution, particularly on the reproductive health of women and men. Research conducted since the Cairo ICPD indicates a strong link among reproductive health, cancers in children and adults, and learning disabilities manifested even a generation after exposure to toxins.
- 3) Gender equity is an important condition of sustainable development. Certain types of environmental degradation disproportionately affect women. Specific attention should be given to the legal restrictions that prevent women from having equal access to the property, technology, and information that allow full participation in sustainable development.
- 4) The recommendations should recognize constraints on the supply of natural resources, not only limits on access. The draft recommendations focus on access to natural resources, such as water, but ignore the fact that there are limits on the supply

of almost all life-sustaining natural resources. For example, in the Western United States water is being moved at great expense to supply growing populations with water but is insufficient to support unlimited growth. We must recognize that the environment itself is limited and places constraints on the ability to sustain quality of life for a growing human population with growing demands.

- 5) The natural environment is not only affected by numbers of people, but also by the activities of those people in their daily lives. In terms of consumption, governments and civil society need to address consumption and undertake education of citizens to promote more sustainable behaviors. It is equally important to implement sustainable and responsible patterns of production by promoting “environmentally and socially responsible” policies.
- 6) The recommendations should consider environmental degradation as one of the root causes of migration. More research is needed on the multiple interrelationships among poverty, economic disparities, environmental degradation, and health and population distribution.
- 7) One of the concerns of the environmental caucus is the confusing use of the term “environment” (‘enabling’ environment vs. ‘natural’ environment). Similarly, the word “resources” is used to indicate both financial resources and natural resources. This has led to confusion among those negotiating the document and should be considered a barrier to effective discussion and collaboration.