

Statement to the Commission on Population and Development
Thirty-second session, March 1999

As written

COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr President,

Five years **after** the Cairo Conference we are still convinced that population growth is one of the major and most pressing challenges facing the human community at the present time. Important progress has been made and we are able to provide concrete facts on this key issue. At the same time, however, the world recognizes that population is one factor in a complex equation that can spell the difference between greater prosperity for all in a more equitable world, or increased poverty, environmental degradation and politico-social tensions of all kinds, as the **Director-General** of UNESCO, Mr Federico Mayor, mentioned during the Cairo Conference. Population policies must therefore form part of an integrated sustainable human development strategy that includes protection of the environment, the promotion of economic wellbeing and the furthering of social progress, including enhancement of the status of women.

The ICPD Programme of Action emphasizes the importance of education, both as an undeniable human right and as a critical factor in promoting social and demographic change. Education is also identified as a key factor in sustainable development. Education enables individuals to gain access to knowledge, a “precondition” for coping with the complexities of the modern world. It influences many fundamental aspects of one’s life experience: nature of work, place of residence, circle of friends and acquaintances, level of aspirations and expectations etc. Education plays an important role in both the transmission and renewal of cultural values and beliefs, including those relating to family preferences and practices. And finally, education has a powerful impact on the course of demographic and social change.

In that context UNESCO has produced a monograph: “Education and Population Dynamics: Mobilizing Minds for a Sustainable Future”, as a central contribution to the **fifth** anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. The monograph describes the multiple interactions between population dynamics and education. It suggests how education – in its broadest sense – can help build awareness of the issues involved and play a determining role in accelerating both development and the demographic transition already under way in many countries. The challenge, it suggests, is to achieve a balance between population, development and the “**carrying** capacity” of the social and **natural** environment. It **emphasizes** the particular impact of education on women. It calls on the international community to mobilize the resources, talent and will needed to shape a future in which every person may live a **peaceful** and productive life. As it is stated in the monograph: *“A critical failing in current development policies is the serious under-investment in education. While more resources are essential, education also needs a new sense of purpose and inspiration, new structures and methods, and openness to innovation and reform. In particular, education needs to make wider use of available information and communication techniques. The challenges of the new millennium will require an energetic mobilization of minds and wills.”*

UNESCO invites all governments, UN institutions, financial institutions and **NGOs** in particular, to analyse this contribution and through this reinforce the international social contract on education as a force of the future.

Mr President, UNESCO is also **fully** committed to the promotion of gender equality, equity and empowerment of women, especially through the strengthening of respect for human rights and **fundamental** freedom, the right to life, and the security of the person through increasing knowledge, public awareness, understanding and commitment concerning population, environment and sustainable development issues. At the same time **UNESCO** is promoting important activities on reproductive health through population education programmes and is mobilizing resources against HIV/AIDS and drug abuse and promoting preventive education.

Concerning research and **proper** management of social transformations related to internal migration and urbanization, as well as international migration, in 1995 an Asia **Pacific** Migration Research Network was created and in 1998 a Network on Migration Research in Africa was launched. All UNESCO's activities on special youth projects aim to strengthen the role of these major groups in both rural and urban environments.

Finally, Mr President, UNESCO is convinced that the five-year review of the Cairo Programme of Action should permit the reinforcement of the engagements taken in 1994. UNESCO is actively engaged in the process of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and in this connection I want to mention the key role played by the UN TSS System of co-operation. Congratulations should be extended to the UN Population Division and UNFPA for the important work and inspiration during the last five years as well as to the **NGOs** for their tremendous energy, creativity, responsibility and the sense of **future**. Also, the role of this Commission is a relevant strategy towards the process of implementation of the goals agreed upon nearly five years ago.

Thank you, **Mr** President.
