

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

As written

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**PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
ICPD+5 REVIEW PROCESS**

Intervention by

Gustavo López Ospina

Director
Transdisciplinary Project:
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Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers and Colleagues,

UNESCO's contribution to the objectives set out in the Programme of Action of the ICPD is in line with the objectives of its Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001. **This strategy** constitutes not only a baseline for the follow-up to the ICPD, but also a coordinated follow-up to other UN conferences as they pertain to population and development-related issues.

UNESCO is keenly aware of the fact that its action can only be complementary to the various and numerous efforts by Member States, the UN System and **NGOs** who are trying to solve the problems inherent to the inter-relationship between population and development.

In 1994, at the Cairo Conference, the Director-General of UNESCO, Dr **Federico** Mayor, said; *"The family is the basic unit of society and the reflection of local, cultural and religious patterns. The search for endogenous solutions to development problems must respect the fundamental role of the family in social life. In particular, the control of fertility should not be based on coercion or technocratic prescription. Nor should it involve the imposition of external models or dogmatic interference. The only sustainable basis for fertility control is the informed choices of empowered men and women, fully conscious of their human rights and dignity."* An important aspect of the empowerment of individuals, particularly the empowerment of women as they have been **left** behind, is education, specifically where it concerns population issues.

The international community is well aware of the importance of this aspect. A few days ago we heard specific suggestions of the distinguished Members of the Commission on Population and Development, to enhance the aspect of education in the work plan of the Commission.

UNESCO moreover considers that five years after the Cairo Conference is a relevant opportunity for serious reflection and analysis of the concrete role of education in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. For this reason, the Director-General of UNESCO decided to prepare a special monograph on *"Education and Population Dynamics: Mobilizing Minds for a Sustainable Future"* as the Organization's contribution to the five-year review. The monograph is available today, for the present **PrepCom**. UNESCO invites governments, institutions, particularly **NGOs**, and experts to analyse the monograph.

Education, of course, is more than schooling. It includes, as mentioned in the monograph, all efforts aimed at conveying knowledge and know-how, shaping attitudes, values and behaviours, and teaching skills, techniques and procedures, both in school and out of school.

The ICPD Programme of Action emphasizes the importance of achieving "universal access to quality education, with particular priority being given to primary and secondary technical education and job training; to combat illiteracy and to eliminate gender disparities in access to, retention in and support for education".

These goals remain far from being achieved. In **1995**, in Amman, during the review of progress towards the goals set at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) it was noted that advances had been made in many countries, especially in expanding primary school enrolments. But progress in closing the gender gap – a factor of critical importance in accelerating the demographic transition – was termed ‘excruciatingly slow’. The expanded vision of basic education espoused in Jomtien has **often** been reduced to the simple emphasis of putting more children into school – essential but only one of many measures needed to achieve education for all.

The education of women has a particularly important impact on maternal and child mortality and morbidity. Education is among the most effective means of eroding traditional attitudes and creating more egalitarian values. Education influences the number of children parents desire, the measures they take to achieve the objective they set themselves and the manner in which they care for and protect the children they have. Education plays a critical and multifaceted role in development. This is why UNESCO’s first educational priority for the last five years has been the promotion of **access** for all to every level of education, and the improvement of the quality and relevance of education.

In **1996**, the **International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century** presented its report that gave rise to a great deal of reflection and debate on education throughout the international community. The **Fifth International Conference on Adult Education** (Hamburg, 1997) led to a re-appraisal of the scope and importance of **adult education**, and **identified** areas for priority action. The **World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 1998)** gave priority to the discussions on teaching, research, and teacher training on sustainable development and population challenges. Next month in Korea, **UNESCO** is promoting the Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education.

UNESCO is actively involved in carrying out actions, at both national and global level, for the protection, observation and further development of human rights. Consolidation of democracy, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, particularly discrimination against women.

Therefore, the Organization has intensified efforts to help women enjoy equal access with men to education, training and research, to be empowered to participate fully in the economic, political and cultural life of the community. “Women” became a priority group for all of the Organization’s activities and a special Unit for the promotion of the status of women and gender equality was created.

Population education programmes provide a setting for developing and testing methods and materials, responding to youth and adolescents’ needs in reproductive health. In this context UNESCO is promoting preventive education as one of the best means of combating HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

UNESCO has a mandate to **contribute** to the development of the social sciences in Member States. In 1994 a major programme was launched in social science research called “Management of Social Transformations” (MOST). As a follow-up to Chapter X of the Cairo Programme of Action, research, training and regional networking activities have been UNESCO’s major vehicles for reinforcing institutional capacity in the social sciences. The *Asia Pacific Migration Research Network* was created and in 1998 the *Network on Migration Research in Africa* was launched.

During the last five years UNESCO has been working for a properly managed relationship between population resources, the environment and development, and enhancing the **full** participation of all relevant groups, especially women and youth.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, UNESCO wishes to emphasize the important role played in the follow-up to the Cairo Programme of Action by **UNFPA**, UN Population Commission, UN inter-agency mechanisms, such as the TSS system, and the active participation of **NGOs** and the civil society. Without the strong support and commitment from governments and parliaments to **all** the ICPD objectives and tasks it will be impossible to achieve the impetus necessary for a sustainable future.

UNESCO is strongly committed to continue playing its part with the broadest possible range of partners inside and outside the UN system to implement the ICPD Programme of Action.

This review should consider the major challenges the humanity faces today, globally and by region. We are at the threshold of the year 2000, a year dedicated by the UN General Assembly to the Culture of Peace. A culture which places human beings at the centre of its preoccupations for the construction of a sustainable future.

Thank you.
