



Esteemed Delegates, Commissioners and fellow members of civil society:

The World Youth Alliance welcomes this year's theme, which focuses on the ICPD Programme of Action in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. As an organization that promotes the dignity of the human person, we understand that the MDGs can only be accomplished when development is person-centered. Indeed, the intrinsic dignity of the human person is the only starting point for creating policies that seek to alleviate poverty, hunger and disease.

**Africa**

**Asia Pacific**

**Europe**

**Latin America**

**North America**

Many discussions have departed from the principle that human beings themselves are the real catalysts for development. Human creativity and culture are forms of capital that cannot be underestimated in the fight to end poverty and disease. With that in mind, we can focus on the MDGs with population and development policies that truly create a framework for human flourishing.

Policies that respect the dignity of the human person will prioritize basic healthcare, education, and investment in infrastructure that will give people access to services and markets. Supporting the family, which is a main factor in preventing and alleviating poverty, should be a priority for governments, policy-making bodies and civil society.

Education is a necessary tool for allowing countries and communities to bring themselves out of poverty. Many nations face problems with educational infrastructure that leaves persons living in rural areas without access to institutions of learning. Removing the underlying obstacles to education, specifically malnutrition and a lack of qualified teachers, to bring both formal and informal education to rural areas should be a priority.

Gender equality can only be achieved when men and women are given real choices for balancing domestic and professional life. Education, access to employment and alternative sources of income offer real choices to women so they are not forced to reduce their fertility, especially if that is not desired. The results of this lack of choice are already seen in Europe, where concentrated measures are now being undertaken to raise levels of fertility in order to maintain economic and political stability.

The problem of maternal and child mortality can be addressed through strengthening the health-care system, supporting families, and building communities. Policies need to ensure

World Youth Alliance  
228 East 71 Street  
New York, New York 10021

Tel 212 585 0757  
Fax 212 585 0785  
Internet [www.wya.net](http://www.wya.net)



access to basic health care to programmes rather than only reducing fertility, which does not address the real needs of women and children.

The focus of maternal health programmes should be on pre-natal, post-natal and emergency obstetric care for women. It is too often the case that women have greater access to services to prevent and terminate their pregnancies than to protect their health during pregnancy and delivery. This situation violates the rights of women and is unacceptable.

Human creativity is the driver behind policies that will combat HIV/AIDS and sustain the environment. New ideas about infrastructure, education and healthy lifestyles proceed from societies that have their basic needs met and their rights respected. The problems of poverty and disease prevent the development of new technologies and policies. The solution is to offer support and opportunities in the quest to create a more prosperous society rather than to suppress the very catalysts of new ideas, human beings themselves..

The time has come to invest in human capital, to allow for freedom in decision-making within the family and society and to re-focus on basic needs of the human person: food, education, shelter, healthcare and proper sanitation. The presumption that lower fertility equals higher prosperity has been challenged and demonstrated to be lacking. Human beings are the objects and means of sustainable development and economic prosperity. All population and development policies must be oriented around this principle. Policies which seek to limit human capital through coercive population measures or repression of creativity, need to be recognized for what they are: damaging to the human community both economically and socially. We invite the international community to make the real needs of the human person a priority, as we continue to move towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you.