

Principles of the Programme of Action

The implementation of the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action is the sovereign right of each country, consistent with national laws and development priorities, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights.

International cooperation and universal solidarity, guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and in a spirit of partnership, are crucial in order to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world.

In addressing the mandate of the International Conference on Population and Development and its overall theme, the interrelationships between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and in their deliberations, the participants were and will continue to be guided by the following set of principles:

Principle 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Principle 2

Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. People are the most important and valuable resource of any nation. Countries should ensure that all individuals are given the opportunity to make the most of their potential. They have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation.

Principle 3

The right to development is a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, and the human person is the central subject of development. While development facilitates the enjoyment of all human rights, the lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally recognized human rights. The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet the population, development and environment needs of present and future generations.

Principle 4

Advancing gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women, and the elimination of all kinds of violence against women, and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility, are cornerstones of population and development-related programmes. The human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, are priority objectives of the international community.

Annex I

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Principle 5

Population-related goals and policies are integral parts of cultural, economic and social development, the principal aim of which is to improve the quality of life of all people.

Principle 6

Sustainable development as a means to ensure human well-being, equitably shared by all people today and in the future, requires that the interrelationships between population, resources, the environment and development should be fully recognized, properly managed and brought into harmonious, dynamic balance. To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate policies, including population-related policies, in order to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Principle 7

All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world. The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed, shall be given special priority. Countries with economies in transition, as well as all other countries, need to be fully integrated into the world economy.

Principle 8

Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States should take all appropriate measures to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, universal access to health-care services, including those related to reproductive health care, which includes family planning and sexual health. Reproductive health-care programmes should provide the widest range of services without any form of coercion. All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so.

Principle 9

The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. In different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses, and husband and wife should be equal partners.

Principle 10

Everyone has the right to education, which shall be directed to the full development of human resources, and human dignity and potential, with particular attention to women and the girl child. Education should be designed to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those relating to population and development. The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his or her education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with the parents.

Principle 11

All States and families should give the highest possible priority to children. The child has the right to standards of living adequate for its well-being and the right to the highest attainable standards of health, and the right to education. The child has the right to be cared for, guided and supported by parents, families and society and to be protected by appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sale, trafficking, sexual abuse, and trafficking in its organs.

Principle 12

Countries receiving documented migrants should provide proper treatment and adequate social welfare services for them and their families, and should ensure their physical safety and security, bearing in mind the special circumstances and needs of countries, in particular developing countries, attempting to meet these objectives or requirements with regard to undocumented migrants, in conformity with the provisions of relevant conventions and international instruments and documents. Countries should guarantee to all migrants all basic human rights as included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Principle 13

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. States have responsibilities with respect to refugees as set forth in the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Principle 14

In considering the population and development needs of indigenous people, States should recognize and support their identity, culture and interests, and enable them to participate fully in the economic, political and social life of the country, particularly where their health, education and well-being are affected.

Principle 15

Sustained economic growth, in the context of sustainable development, and social progress require that growth be broadly based, offering equal opportunities to all people. All countries should recognize their common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development, and should continue to improve their efforts to promote sustained economic growth and to narrow imbalances in a manner that can benefit all countries, particularly the developing countries.