



THE HAGUE FORUM 8-12 FEBRUARY 1999

The International Forum for the Operational Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action (POA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) will meet from 8-12 February 1999 at the Netherlands Congress Centre in The Hague. The Hague Forum is an integral part of a five-year review of the implementation of the ICPD POA (ICPD+5), which will culminate in a Special Session of the UN General Assembly from 30 June-2 July 1999. The Forum is organized by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and hosted by the Dutch government.

The goals of the Hague Forum are to: examine experiences and lessons learned by governments, international and regional organizations and civil society in country-level implementation of the POA; provide technical inputs to the Special Session; and bring together a wide variety of partners to refocus commitment on population and development. The Forum will assess country-level operational and programme experience in POA implementation, focusing on five substantive themes: creation of an enabling environment for the further implementation of the POA; reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health and reproductive rights; gender equality, equity and empowerment of women; strengthening of partnerships; and resource flows and financing for POA implementation.

The main document of the Forum is a background paper, produced by UNFPA, entitled "A Five-Year Review of Progress towards the Implementation of the ICPD POA." The paper identifies further action required in the five thematic areas and synthesizes the findings from round-table and technical meetings, conclusions from consultations organized by the UN Regional Commissions, responses to a global field inquiry conducted by UNFPA in mid-1998, and progress reports on ICPD implementation by UN specialized agencies.

During the coming week, delegates will meet in parallel Plenary and Main Committee sessions. Plenary sessions will address the operational review and assessment of POA implementation at the country level, and the Main Committee will consider the five substantive themes. A report summarizing the Plenary and Main Committee proceedings will be submitted by the Forum Rapporteur for adoption at the final Plenary on Friday. A separate document outlining operational perspectives on further implementation will be formulated by the Forum Bureau, acting as a drafting committee, and submitted to the final Plenary for adoption and inclusion in the final report of the Forum. It will be presented to the 32nd session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in March 1999 and will be taken into account in the preparation of the Secretary-General's Report to the Special Session.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ICPD+5 PROCESS

The ICPD was held in Cairo, Egypt from 5-13 September 1994. An estimated 20,000 government delegates, UN representatives, NGOs and media representatives attended the conference, which adopted a sixteen-chapter POA in the area of population and development.

In Resolution 52/188 of 18 December 1997, the UN General Assembly decided to convene a Special Session from 30 June-2 July 1999 to review and appraise implementation of the ICPD POA. The General Assembly emphasized that existing agreements contained in the POA would not be renegotiated. The General Assembly designated the CPD as the preparatory body for the Special Session and the 32nd session of the CPD as the preparatory committee. The Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNFPA are collaborating and coordinating the ICPD review process leading up to the Special Session.

ROUNDTABLE AND TECHNICAL MEETINGS

Leading up to The Hague Forum, a number of meetings were convened to provide input into ICPD+5. UNFPA organized four round-table and three technical meetings in 1998, which focused on key themes in the POA. The outcomes of these meetings are summarized below. In addition, UNFPA and the UN Regional Commissions conducted five-year regional reviews on population and development: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 24-27 March, Bangkok; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 13-14 May, Aruba; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 22-25 September, Beirut; Economic Commission for Africa, 23-25 September, Addis Ababa; and Economic Commission for Europe, 7-9 December, Budapest. The outcomes from these activities will be discussed at The Hague Forum as inputs to the ICPD+5 review.

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH: This round-table meeting took place in New York from 14-17 April to review progress in implementing ICPD recommendations, identify constraints and propose key future actions. Participants noted that while early marriage and some harmful traditional practices are diminishing, measures to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among adolescents remain inadequate, and there is an alarming rise in HIV infection among young people. Participants agreed that adolescents' reproductive health rights are gradually being realized, more countries are formulating policies and initiating effective programming, adolescent participation is gradually increasing and gender equality has improved. In identifying constraints, the round-table concluded that resistance to providing information and services to address adolescents' sexual and reproductive health needs has deterred them from seeking help. Financial constraints, poverty, a lack of indicators of adolescent development, inadequate research to expand knowledge of effective programmes and limited accessibility to resources for innovative initiatives were also highlighted as constraints. Actions recommended to address these constraints included: equipping adults to better help adolescents; expanding national policies and implementing rights; increasing and sustaining youth participation; establishing better indicators of progress; conducting more evaluation of initiatives; and encouraging cost-sharing and innovative financing.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMMES, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, MALE INVOLVEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS: This round-table meeting was

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convened in Kampala, Uganda from 22-25 June to identify strategies to ensure reproductive rights and make sexual and reproductive health programmes operational, as well as to highlight successes and constraints and recommend future actions. Participants stressed the need for universal and balanced attention and investment to implement family planning, ensure maternal health and reduce infant mortality and morbidity, and prevent and treat STDs, including HIV/AIDS. They emphasized the need to reduce verticality of programmes and called for integration of all aspects of reproductive health in the context of primary health care and health sector reform. The round-table proposed action on: health sector reforms to ensure equitable sexual and reproductive health; reorientation of health systems to ensure that sexual and reproductive health policies, strategic plans and all aspects of implementation are rights-based; health system structural reform involving infrastructure, human resource development and financing to achieve both coverage and quality; and increased investment in structural integration of reproductive health services, training, networking, empowerment of people; and creation of enabling environments through participatory processes at all levels.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: This technical symposium took place in The Hague from 29 June-3 July, and assessed management of migration issues facing policy makers in countries of origin and destination through enhanced international cooperation. Discussion focused on: return migration; forced migration and responses to asylum-seekers; challenges to the international community posed by international migration; impacts on migration of globalization; regional economic cooperation mechanisms, poverty and environmental degradation; remittances; participation of women in international migration; migration of skilled personnel; protection in diverse settings of basic rights of workers employed abroad; and status of long-term foreign residents in their host society. Participants stressed international cooperation based on an appropriate balance of the concerns of relevant parties. The international harmonization of migration and asylum policies, most likely in stages starting at the subregional and regional levels, was seen as the appropriate long-term goal. Participants drew attention to the gulf between formal rights and actual treatment of migrants and to the need for conditions favoring the full participation of migrants in society. Ill-conceived control mechanisms or a disproportionate focus on control were seen as possibly contributing to the rise in irregular migration. The symposium stressed the need for better collection and analysis of data on various aspects of international migration.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY: This round-table meeting was convened in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 27-30 July to review the status of partnerships among civil society, government and the international community, identify successes and constraints and propose future actions to promote and enhance partnerships. Participants noted that significant progress has been achieved in undertaking collaborative efforts. They called on governments to: adopt measures to facilitate civil society involvement; strengthen and intensify social and resource mobilization efforts and formulate advocacy strategies based on socio-cultural and economic research; prioritize strengthening human resource management, technical capabilities, institutional capacities and financial viability; and, with NGOs, the private sector and international organizations, identify areas to promote innovative modalities for concerted action to achieve programme complementarity and synergy.

POPULATION AGEING: This technical meeting was held in Brussels from 6-9 October. Its aim was to review experiences and policies on population ageing to identify new initiatives and key future actions needed to meet the needs of the elderly, with a special focus on gender and poverty issues. The experts noted that the UN 1999 International Year of Older Persons would provide a significant opportunity for highlighting the magnitude and urgency of population ageing issues. They urged that effective policies be implemented during the next few years to avoid a potential crisis caused by population ageing, particularly in developing countries. The meeting concluded that governments and international organizations need to exercise the necessary political will and should aim to provide a full range of adequately funded basic services to older persons. It also proposed that governments and other relevant groups adopt a range of forward-looking policies, such as removing barriers to work that are based on age rather than ability. Various

programmes were suggested, including promoting the use of local health facilities by older persons. The need for capacity building, research and training was also emphasized.

POPULATION CHANGE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: This symposium was held in Bellagio, Italy from 2-6 November. Reviewing new scientific evidence, it addressed the effects of fertility decline and other demographic changes on economic growth, poverty and inequality. It also considered the effects of population growth on sustainable resource use in agriculture and overall implications for economic, social and population policies and programmes. Participants noted that economic growth is not an end in itself but a means to the larger objectives of improved well-being. Evidence that high fertility constrains economic growth was not seen as a rationale in itself for public interventions to reduce fertility, particularly if the means to reduce fertility compromise individual well-being and rights. It was emphasized that policies and interventions to improve poor families' situations are justified by evidence that high fertility exacerbates poverty and that, among the poor, some portion of high fertility is unwanted or unintended. Participants agreed that undoing existing policy-induced distortions should be the highest priority. Good economic policies were noted to contribute to fertility reduction, and fertility decline was considered more likely to encourage economic growth if economic frameworks are sound. Participants supported non-coercive programmes for the poor to increase their options.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES IN CRISIS SITUATIONS: At this technical meeting held in Rennes, France from 3-5 November, experts assessed progress in meeting the reproductive health needs of people in crisis situations. Participants identified these needs, assessed current services, debated constraints and failures, and made recommendations for future improvements. Areas examined in detail included minimum services in emergencies, sexual violence, adolescent reproductive health needs, coordination of reproductive health services, information systems, and STDs, including HIV/AIDS. The meeting recognized that some achievements have been recorded since 1994 but much more work is necessary. Participants recommended future actions, including, *inter alia*: making reproductive health part of primary health care packages in emergency situations; encouraging target community participation; increasing efforts to secure funding and improve human resources; establishing a central documentation center; clarifying the status and rights of internally displaced persons; improving coordination at all levels; and increasing services aimed at adolescents.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The opening Plenary will begin in Prins Willem-Alexander Hall at 10:00 am. The Plenary will elect the Forum President (expected to be Amb. Nicolaas Biegan of the Netherlands), the Main Committee Chair (expected to be Chowdhury Anwarul of Bangladesh) and the Bureau. Delegates will hear keynote speeches and reports from the Parliamentarians', Youth and NGO Forums, which immediately preceded the Forum. At 12:00 pm, the operational review and assessment of POA implementation will commence.

MAIN COMMITTEE: The consideration of substantive themes will begin in a Main Committee at 3:00 pm in the Van Gogh Hall. The focus of the first theme is "Creating an enabling environment for further implementation of the ICPD POA."

The Earth Negotiations Bulletin offers its sincere condolences to the Government and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the death of King Hussein.