Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 771 (1982)[1]

Trends and prospects for population changes in Europe and less developed countries

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its resolutions concerning the demographic and development policies of member states of the Council of Europe, in particular Recommendation 865 (1979), on the implications of demographic change for social and migration policy, and Resolution 747 (1981), on global prospects : human needs and the Earth's resources ;

2. Taking note of the results of the Colloquy on "Trends and prospects for population changes in Europe and less developed countries", organised jointly by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in December 1981 ;

3. Stressing the support expressed by the colloquy for the initiative taken by the Parliamentary Assembly to organise a conference of representatives of governments, politicians, experts and international organisations on Europe's contribution towards a fairer sharing and better preservation of the Earth's physical resources and the improvement of North-South relations to be held in 1983 ;

4. Welcoming the decision by the Committee of Ministers to hold a European Population Conference for demographers, administrators and parliamentarians in Strasbourg in September 1982 on European demographic trends and policy responses ;

5. Having considered the report of its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography (Doc. 4875) ;

6. Stressing the urgent necessity to meet the targets set by the Colombo Declaration on Population and Development, adopted in 1979, in particular the call for an increase of the overall allocation of international assistance to UNFPA and other related programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, bilateral aid programmes and non-governmental organisations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), in order to meet the foreseen large increases in both the need and the demand for assistance from all parts of the developing world, and in order more effectively to integrate population and developing programmes designed to improve the quality of life for all people ;

7. Recognising that migrant workers have made a positive contribution to the development of industrial countries, especially taking account of the increasing birth-rates in these countries and the fact that this tendency is compensated by the high birth-rate among migrant workers' families,

8. Invites the governments and parliaments of member states of the Council of Europe :

a. when drawing up their policies in the field of population and development, to co-ordinate their action in the light of the considerations expressed in the appendix to this resolution ;

1. Assembly debate on 26 and 27 April 1982 (1st and 2nd Sittings) (see Doc. 4875, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 April 1982 (2nd Sitting).

b. to give their full support to the conference of representatives of governments, politicians, experts and international organisations on Europe's contribution towards a fairer sharing and better preservation of the Earth's physical resources and the improvement of North-South relations to be held in 1983 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ;

c. to give their full support to the decision of the Committee of Ministers to hold a European Population Conference for demographers, administrators and parliamentarians in Strasbourg in September 1982 on European Demographic Trends and Policy Responses.

Appendix

1. There is a considerable latent demand by women for means to control and limit their fertility ; one of the major obstacles is the lack of access to modern methods of contraception.

2. The major problem in the long run in the less developed countries is to create conditions which will result in a fall in fertility to a level close to that required to ensure the replacement of their populations.

3. Any policy designed to reduce the birth-rates in the less developed countries must in the first place create public attitudes and conditions of life in which individuals perceive it to be to their own advantage to reduce the number of children. They should also be persuaded that a decrease in infant mortality rates is tied to public health improvements which can ensure that most of their children will survive. Secondly, information about methods by which they can limit the size of their family and means which enable them to implement fertility reduction must be available to them. Neither of these two aspects can be tackled in isolation from the other.

4. Opposition to birth-control is weakening, as the governments of the less developed countries increasingly realise that rapid population growth constitutes an important obstacle to their further economic and social development. At the same time, it must be recognised that there remain some methods of birth-control which are not acceptable to people of certain religious persuasions.

5. The creation of a public opinion, with particular emphasis on education, and of conditions of life which will favour the use of family planning methods must be part of a general policy for economic and social development.

6. The most important aspect of development policy is to raise the standard of living of the less developed countries, and to create employment opportunities for their populations.

7. The adoption of such policies implies that there must be a reduction in the inequality between conditions in more developed and less developed countries.

8. Governments and parliaments in the more developed countries have a duty to make it clear to their electorates that a reduction in international inequality will lead to benefits in the long run, and that failure to implement reductions in population growth may well result in increasing social and international tensions.

9. In development programmes, some aid should be earmarked for population assistance. This is not synonymous with assistance for family planning, even though family planning must be part of any successful programme for population control. Further assistance to research into factors which determine fertility and population growth should also be encouraged. The training and equipment of medical and para-medical personnel to undertake preventive and curative programmes, propaganda to encourage delayed marriage, and research aimed to improve both the technical quality of contraceptives and their acceptability, all come under this heading.