

Recommendation 1515 (2001)¹

Demographic change and sustainable development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Throughout the world some 600 000 women die each year in pregnancy or childbirth, according to the conclusions of the Interparliamentary Conference on Demographic Change and Sustainable Development organised in Bucharest on 21 and 22 October 1999 by the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography. Moreover, within the space of one hour, an estimated 250 young women will be infected by the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) and 228 will undergo genital mutilation.

2. Appalled by the suffering behind these figures, and recalling its Recommendations 1243 (1994) and 1260 (1995), the Parliamentary Assembly strongly reaffirms its support for the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in September 1994.

3. The Assembly also endorses the key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (Ungass) in New York in June and July 1999.

The Assembly considers, in line with the findings of the Ungass, that although some progress has been made in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, many challenges still remain, particularly in meeting donor commitments and ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights. In particular, many Council of Europe member states are still not meeting the internationally agreed target level for official development assistance (ODA) of 0.7% of gross national product. Nor have they generally lived up to their commitment, made in Cairo, to earmark 4% of this assistance for population programmes and improving reproductive health.

The Assembly considers also that legislative reform designed to improve access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services is proceeding too slowly. The Assembly emphasises that Council of Europe member states must take urgent and vigorous action – financial, legislative and institutional – to speed up further progress. It considers that the necessary resources could be found through the more generous distribution of the wealth created by the globalisation of the economy. Raising living standards in the poorest countries would undoubtedly contribute to the stabilisation of the world's population.

The Assembly considers also that when it comes to the next periodic review at “Cairo + 10”, greater attention should be paid to the interrelationship between population growth, sustained development and ecological sustainability.

The Assembly recommends therefore that the Committee of Ministers:

1. give high priority to population as well as to sexual and reproductive health and rights issues in its intergovernmental work programme;
2. speed up the work of the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men towards the adoption of a recommendation to governments on the right to free choice in matters of sexuality and reproduction;

1. Assembly debate on 27 April 2001 (16th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8806](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Paslaru). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 April 2001 (16th Sitting).



3. instruct the appropriate intergovernmental committee to review, in due time, progress by the Council of Europe member states in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action as a contribution to the "Cairo + 10" review process;
4. call on the governments of the member states to reaffirm their support for the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions identified for its further implementation by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session of June and July 1999, and in particular to act on the following recommendations:
 - a. take urgent action on the financial, legislative and institutional levels to speed up the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action;
 - b. take the necessary measures, by reviewing development and co-operation policies and funding priorities, to meet the ICPD commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNP to official development assistance and 4% of the ODA budget to population and reproductive health programmes;
 - c. systematically include the population dimension in development policies and programmes;
 - d. redefine development assistance policies in all sectors which have an impact on demographic behaviour, including education, culture, health, and family policy, with a view to promoting the objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action;
 - e. provide the resources to enable developing countries and countries in transition to create suitable mechanisms (databases, census, surveys and administrative records) for the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action;
 - f. develop joint projects, both domestic and international, with the non-governmental and private sectors in the field of population, reproductive health and gender issues within the framework of the ICPD commitments;
 - g. initiate legislation, where necessary, to guarantee freedom of choice in matters of sexuality and reproduction;
 - h. initiate legislation, and/or include in existing penal codes, provisions banning the practice of genital mutilation of women and girls, including sanctions against the persons who perform or promote it, and make available information and education concerning the negative consequences of female genital mutilation;
 - i. guarantee universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services and to a full range of modern means of contraception, including those specifically adapted to the needs of young people;
 - j. promote greater awareness among men of their role and responsibilities in regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights and as partners for women's empowerment;
 - k. take steps, where necessary, to establish a national structure on population and development to co-ordinate, monitor and initiate action on these issues at national and international levels.

The Parliamentary Assembly urges its members to promote awareness of population and development issues in the national parliaments, initiate legislative reform where necessary, and call on their governments to fulfil their financial commitments, made in Cairo, to the implementation of the Programme of Action. For this purpose, members are invited to propose the setting up of all-party groups on population and development where these do not yet exist and to support the establishment of regional parliamentary networks and exchanges. In this context, the Assembly strongly supports the setting up of an inter-European parliamentary forum on population and development.