



الدوحة، ١٨ - ٢٠ مايو ٢٠٠٩
Doha 18-20 May 2009

DOHA DECLARATION

I. Preamble

We, the heads of population councils/commissions in the Arab States, representatives of international and regional organizations, and international experts and researchers participating in the “Arab Conference on Population and Development: Facts and Perspectives” held in Doha, Qatar, 18-20 May 2009, which is organized during a critical stage of work directions and priorities on population and development issues in the Arab World. The conference marks the 15th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo (1994) and mid-point towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. This calls for analyses of the population and development situation and its implication taking into consideration the following:

- **Affirmation** of our full commitment to the ICPD Program of Action and to the MDGs framework, as they constitute a consolidated package of related targets that reinforce each other, and which collectively aim to improve the quality of life of all people, especially the vulnerable population groups, in alleviating poverty, achieving universal primary education, narrowing gender gaps and closing social inequalities, improving child health, promoting reproductive health and rights, combating sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, and eliminating violence against women.
- **Identification** of lessons learned and accumulated experiences during the last 15 years, best practices associated with the demographic transition, maximization of the demographic window of opportunities, formulation of a strategic vision for priority programs and for achievement of the MDGs in conformity with the norms and cultural values of the region.
- **Formulation** of programs adopting rights-based approaches and empowerment of persons in need at all levels, to develop their resource potentials and skills to support economic growth in the region.
- **The population and development situation** in the Arab World, its importance for regional integration and for maximizing the added values of human capital development for all countries in the region.
- **The impacts of the global financial and food crises** on the population situation in the Arab World.
- **The unfavorable** conditions arising from conflict and crises, and their impacts on the population and humanitarian situations.

Guided by the:

- Goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and Amman Declaration (1993).
- Millennium Development Declaration and Goals (2000)
- Arab Summits' Decisions on:
 - Activation of young people participation (Khartoum 2006)
 - Development of Arab Education (Riyadh 2007)
 - Endorsement of the Strategy for Education (Damascus 2008)
 - The Economic and Social Development Summit (Kuwait 2009)
- Arab Declaration on Empowerment of Young People (2006)
- Arab Declaration on Migration (LAS Economic and Social Development Council 2000)
- Action plans and recommendations issued by the United Nations Conferences, especially on population, women, young people, environment, sustainable development, and related issues.

Based on numerous achievements on population and development made by the Arab States, in spite of the existence of significant disparities in these achievements, requires efforts to bridge the gaps between countries.

Realizing that achievement of targets at the national and regional levels requires expansion and deepening of partnership among government bodies, community based organizations, private sector, regional and international organizations concerned with population and development;

Acknowledging that achievement of mutual positive interrelationship between population and development requires conducive economic, political, social and cultural environment;

Highlighting the important role of equity, equality, women empowerment, and bridging the gender gap in achieving population targets and the MDGs;

Assuring the sovereignty of each Arab State to implement the recommendations in a culturally, socially, and legally acceptable environment conducive to the national population and development priorities, and in context of national commitment to human rights;

In conformity with the specificity of the demographic transition, and with all of its consequences and implications in the Arab World, the situation requires intensification of efforts and attentions to the empowerment of women and young people, and to support their human rights without undermining the rights of other population groups;

And in **context of assessing the achievements made** by Arab States towards the implementation of the ICPD PoA and the MDGs, which vary considerably between countries, particularly in the areas of education, health, and infant and child mortality. On environmental conservation, the Arab States made progress on the

formulation of programs, policies and legal frameworks, and on environmental indicators. Arab States seek to reduce poverty, and to promote gender equality and women empowerment. However, these measures need more support in order to achieve real and tangible results. By contrast, minimal progress has been made on reducing maternal mortality and increasing access to reproductive health information and services including family planning. With regard to maternal mortality, assessment reports for 2008 indicate an average rate of 160 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births for year 2005, ranging from 4 to 1000. Extra efforts are needed to reduce the regional average maternal mortality ratio to 40; the target for year 2015. There are countries where family planning methods are still hard to access, where the contraceptive prevalence rates are low and unmet need is high. Also, the assessment reports for 2008 show that extreme poverty continued at the same level of 3.8% for the period 1999-2005. These results call for actions to reduce maternal mortality at fast pace so as to attain the target, and this might be possible in the wake of increasing revenues in some countries.

In addition to these challenges, available information and the lessons learned from implementation of the ICPD PoA in the region indicate existence of a number of challenges that can determine work priorities during this period. These challenges are represented in:

- **Rapidly changing age structure** and the increasing number of young people aged 15 to 24, and its consequences for population and development;
- The **gender gap** and impacts of inherited culture on women's participation and opportunities;
- **Weak integration** of the population dimension in sustainable development programs, and weak use of population and development interrelations to attain the ICPD PoA targets in the framework of the MDGs, and to provide the mechanisms that would allow such achievements including determination of the costs and benefits of the implemented programs;
- **Wide differentials** in the population situation and demographic indicators among and within countries, and in urban and rural areas;
- Demographic, social and economic impacts of **international migration**, including undocumented migration; and
- **Shortage of accurate and reliable statistics** to conduct demographic analyses, study their relations to sustainable development, and to provide opportunities to monitor the existing policies and strategies.

II. Priorities

Based on the above, the participants highlighted the following priorities for action during the next phase:

- **Improve and expand** the scope of opportunities and choices of citizens in order to increase the standard of living and quality of life, and to alleviate poverty;
- **Employment of the demographic window of opportunity** to empower young people, who are considered the main factor for population and development policies. Ensure their rights to quality health, education, work, capacity development, training, and protect them from all risks;
- **Expedite the achievement of the maternal health** goal and access to comprehensive reproductive health care services for all, to improve maternal health, and factor this goal in population and health policies; enhance the efficiency of health care systems capacities, and secure the financial and human resources;
- **Achieve the gender and women empowerment** goal, confront all types of discrimination and gender-based violence through integrating this goal in population and development policies, formulating legislations based on international resolutions and agreements, advancing specific institutions and mechanisms to achieve this goal with efficiency and effectiveness;
- **Sustain the environment** and provide basic infrastructure services such as clean water and sanitation in all regions;
- **Employment of migrant resource potentials** for development, especially skilled Arab migrants, establish communications between the migrants and their communities, formulate policies for better management of migration and ensure best use of their skills and remittances, especially in the area of scientific research and localization of knowledge with consideration of the enabling environment and incentives for their voluntary return;
- **Give special attention to the population and development** conditions in the Arab states affected by occupation, war and conflict; especially in the areas of sickness, death, women's and children's issues, forced migration and poverty;

- **Develop national institutions**, especially the national population councils/commissions and related institutions, and enhance their work modalities and develop the capacities of their employees;
- **Enhance networking**, coordination and partnership between government institutions, civil society organizations, regional and international organizations, including The League of Arab States, to provide specific mechanisms for population and development at regional and national levels;
- **Develop and support legislations**, especially those related to the rights of diverse social population groups, and facilitate the role of parliamentary committees on population and development matters;
- **Develop information systems**, data collection and analysis, and conduct in-depth comparative studies, while developing human capacities;
- **Give due attention to the elderly** and improve quality services and develop alternative care, conduct scientific research to study their situation and identify their needs; and
- **Secure funds for population programs**; develop ways and mechanisms to sustain financing through establishing Arab trust fund with participation of the Arab private sector.

III. Recommendations

In line with the commitment to achieve the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and in harmony with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and for establishing directives and formulating recommendations to ensure the continuum to achieve these goals in the next five years, in light of the identified population opportunities and challenges, and emphasizing the importance of the rights-based approach, sustainable development, gender mainstreaming, environmental protection and sustainability, capacity building and results-based approach to ensure the commitments that will fulfill the needs for the desired quality of life we, the participants of the “Conference on Population and

Development: Facts and Perspectives” call on Arab governments and development partners at national level, concerned regional and international organizations to multiply their efforts and expand partnerships to achieve these goals. Such efforts should take into account the impact of the global economic crisis on population matters in the Arab region, especially on issues such as empowerment of women, young people and labor migration within and outside the region, which require intensified efforts and focus to improve quality of life of all people in the region without discrimination–

We, the participants:

1. Reproductive Health and Rights

- a) Urge Arab governments to adopt the life cycle and comprehensive approach of reproductive health, and help women avoid early marriage, pregnancy and early delivery. Provide information and quality services to help couples in all areas of the region take the reproduction decisions based on accurate and reliable information; exercise their rights to access quality services without financial, cultural, institutional or any other obstacles.
- b) Call on Arab governments to provide special and due attention to adolescent reproductive health and other high risk groups, particularly the risk of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, by meeting their information needs and services through programmes addressing them directly, and through enhancement of the role of NGOs and civil society.
- c) Adopt preventive and curative measures to improve children’s health and reduce maternal morbidity and mortality risks through improvement of the health systems, infrastructure and services, including family planning, and through promotion of healthy reproductive behaviors.
- d) Support scientific research and studies in various reproductive health and rights themes, including child and maternal mortality
- e) Intensify information and education programmes, and raise people awareness on population issues to improve reproductive health and change unhealthy behaviors.

2- Gender and Empowerment of Women

- a) Call on Arab governments to integrate gender and empowerment of women and measures to alleviate all kinds of gender discrimination in all macro and sectoral development plans and strategies, in particular access to equal opportunities, health services, employment, resource management and independence of financial decisions, and urge governments to enact decisions and legislations that broaden women participation in political and legislative decision making.
- b) Empower women to benefit from equal opportunities in occupational mobility, especially at management, executive and political levels, and address legal and cultural challenges.
- c) Take appropriate and effective measures to disseminate and enact national and international norms and procedures to prevent gender-based violence.
- d) Develop mechanisms and procedures to enhance capacities of those working in women's rights protection and their institutional empowerment, to improve their performance to achieve better results on the ground.
- e) Affirm the rights of women with disabilities in employment and rehabilitation and access to services.

3- Empower Young People and Broaden their Participatory Choices

- a) Urge Arab countries to develop strategies, plans and programmes; increase investment in youth educational, training and capacity development programmes, in health risk prevention, with special focus on the marginalized and most vulnerable to HIV/ AIDS and drugs, and in community participation, equal opportunity for work, production and political participation, as well as monitoring and evaluation systems and strategy development.
- b) Call on governments to support and enhance national capacities to develop their human and youth capitals in knowledge and skills, expand their choices in economic and political participation, taking into consideration integration of population issues in policies at macro level, as well as in sectoral development plans.
- c) Conduct surveys and research in various youth issues, including qualitative research at national levels, on youth values to monitor changes in that area.
- d) Integrate youth issues and policies in national development strategies and policies, including institutional capacity building of government and NGOs to

become more responsive to the participation needs of young people in activities and decision making.

4- Internal and International Migration and Development

- a) Develop and support systems and mechanisms providing qualitative and quantitative data and information on various international migration issues to contribute to filling the information gap, develop regional and national policies, identify monitoring and evaluation indicators to observe and document emerging issues in migration trends.
- b) Revitalize the role of institutions in the Arab world working in the area of international migration research and studies, especially those focusing on maximization of the benefits and reducing negative impact of migration in order to strengthen its role in integration of Arab labor markets.
- c) Enhance national multi-sectoral policies and partnership with all concerned government bodies and national expatriates; provide technical support to institutions concerned with policy development and coordination of implementation; enact national and regional policies aiming at maximizing migration returns and investment of revenues and increase migrants' competitive skills in Arab and international labor markets.
- d) Intensify dialogue and partnership; facilitate labor mobility in accordance with needs of both sending and receiving countries, to limit illegal migration and human trafficking networks, and maximize the benefits of labor migration in light of the emerging economic and demographic transformations.
- e) Develop appropriate policies and strategies to strengthen linkages among Arab migrants and with their home countries, which will benefit all and increase the contribution of technical knowledge and investments in the Arab countries.
- f) Call on the League of Arab States (LAS) to coordinate efforts and form an expert and decision-making task force representing international and regional organizations to develop labor migration policies to be adopted by LAS to enhance the developmental dimension of migration at national and regional levels.
- g) Work on the structural imbalances of the population of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) through enhancement of development of national human resources through education, training and rehabilitation; increase women

- participation in the labor force; lift restrictions of inter-GCC labor migration; and give priority to the Arab labor force.
- h) Develop policies and strategies to limit internal migration from rural to urban areas, especially among young people.
 - i) Urge Arab countries, international and regional organizations to deal with and resolve problems emerging from forced migration, and provide protection and services to forced migrants.

5- Elderly Persons

- a) Call relevant institutions and governments to conduct assessment studies and research on living conditions of the elderly, which focus on their social and health conditions including psychological, and their opportunities to participate and maximize the benefit from their cumulative expertise.
- b) Call on Governments to develop necessary policies, strategies and programmes to support positive ageing and care giving to older persons.

6- Mechanisms: Partnership, Institutional Development and Capacity Building

- a) Call on countries to provide financial, technical, legislative and institutional support to national population commissions/councils in order to play active roles, and call for countries that do not have such bodies to establish ones as soon as possible.
- b) Call on LAS and UNFPA, and other organizations to develop plans and programmes to enhance capacities of councils/commissions and similar bodies, and provide assistance to countries in process of establishing such institutions.
- c) Call on LAS, UNFPA and ESCWA to organize a regional meeting in two years for a mid-term review of strategies, methodologies and progress set forth to achieve the ICPD and MDG goals by 2014, and beyond. Also to establish a follow up committee representing the three organizations in addition to the Permanent Population Commission of Qatar to follow-up in the implementation of the Doha Declaration.
- d) Call on LAS to call on all international and regional organizations concerned with population and development to increase regional coordination to plan and launch joint regional initiatives, to mobilize resources and maximize returns, and to organize periodic technical workshops/seminars focusing on priority population issues.

- e) Develop and strengthen partnership among all parties working on population issues at the regional, national and local levels, and provide necessary financial resources.
- f) Activate cooperation among Arab countries and encourage experience and knowledge sharing and exchanges.
- g) Call on countries and organizations to provide the necessary financial resources to assist Arab countries achieve the goals of the ICPD PoA.
- h) Urge countries in the region to provide required financial resources to achieve the ICPD goals, and to avoid the negative impact of the global economic crisis, especially on the vulnerable groups.

7. Data, Information, Research and Development

- a) Call on LAS, UNFPA and ESCWA to update regional databases on population and development, family health and other related issues, and disseminate them among researchers and decision makers.
- b) Call on countries in the region to expand availability of quantitative and qualitative population and related data through conducting surveys and in-depth analysis, to conduct comparative studies across countries in order to enable better utilization of results and accumulated experience, best practices in development, updating and monitoring of policies and programmes.
- c) Call on UNFPA, and other international and regional organizations to expand support for regional and national capacity building in research and data collection through population censuses and sample surveys focusing on youth, women, children and persons with disabilities, etc., as well as building capacities in in-depth and policy-oriented analysis using software packages.
- d) Increase quantitative data and characteristics on youth through specialized research and scientific studies to forecast future trends.
- e) Coordinate among Arab countries for youth surveys and prepare pre-identified list of comparative indicators, as well as benefit from existing expertise and experiences in that area.
- f) Call on Arab countries, LAS and UNFPA to enhance partnership with civil society and private sector at the national and regional levels, and to avail necessary support to activate their role in achieving the MDGs

8. Media

- a) Develop targeted population communication strategies to disseminate accurate population-related knowledge and information, and support positive attitudes, values and behaviors to help achieve the MDGs.

Thanks and appreciation

Annexing the Declaration, we collectively decide to:

- I. Follow-up with appreciation and interest on the continued efforts exerted in the Arab countries throughout the past decades, especially those of UNFPA, LAS and ESCWA that contributed to elevating the population's knowledge, arriving at regional and national consensus on population issues and improving performance in diverse related areas.
- II. Greatly appreciate the efforts made by the State of Qatar; government, people, and the Permanent Population Commission (the General Secretariat for Planning and Development) for hosting this conference for all the logistics, especially the generous welcome and hospitality.
- III. Our appreciation to all scientific, planning and institutional efforts exerted by the Arab countries that reflect their growing attention to population issues, where the number of national population councils and committees have increased, and more strategies, policies and population plans have been enacted and implemented.
- IV. Finally our collective recognition, officials and experts alike, that the efforts of diverse partners and population specialists had accumulated and created a quantum leap in the Arab population mind, which represents consciousness in the political and scientific links of population and development, view their alternate impact that continue to reflect on the demographic transformation in the Arab countries and on the standards of living of Arab citizens.