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U.S. STATEMENT AT THE UNDP GOVERNING COUNCIL
31st Session, Geneva, Switzerland
June 25, 1984

THE UN FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

Truncated Draft 6/21/84

President Reagan has set forth the dimensions of our shared concern in his statement to the International Conference on Population -- as he said:

World leaders have come to recognize that the historically unprecedented growth of population now occurring in many countries affects economic and social development and presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities. It is for these reasons that the United States provides bilateral and multilateral assistance in population programs.

Nations have their differences with respect to these matters; as do organized groups within our nations; as do religious groups speaking, in many cases, for world-wide constituencies; as do individuals in our societies. While we have a large area of shared concern, this condition may suggest that all governments and international organizations should respect the judgments of individuals and families, everywhere, in so intimate and personal a matter.

Still, separate governments, and the UNFPA as well, can properly advance toward certain goals respecting family planning, in support of which the United States can join on these principles:

- Coerce no parent, or would-be parent, to abandon their own private plans and convictions in matters of human reproduction. Treat both sociology and demographics, in the end, as exercises in description -- an analysis of the residual product of aggregated private actions.

- Recognize, in the same vein, the essential futility of seeking to advance economic welfare by imposing devices of central command and control.

- Provide, above all, information, on which families can rely to implement their own choices.

- Do not apologize for the view that, just as every nation ultimately bears responsibility for the burdens and restrictions it places on its citizens, each family properly bears responsibility for the choices it makes -- if it makes them after being informed.

- Allow materials, and accompanying information, to be distributed by effective, anonymous, and non-coercive means, viz., through commercial promotion and distribution.

- Consider that the most effective governmental contribution to family planning -- the dissemination of information and affordable materials -- might be toleration (and subsidization, if chosen) of private and commercial distribution.

- Recognize that economic development, clearly best promoted by proven free-market institutions, provides the climate in which families will become both better educated and less inclined, arguably, to over-populate in search of old age support.

- Respect the social institutions, the cultural mores, and the religious convictions of all nations.

As we tolerate and support the institutions that others have developed, we ask for the understanding of others that our nation, in seeking to contribute to the solution of "population problems," will not act in a manner contrary to the dictates of our national conscience.

It is the public policy of the United States, declared by our elected representatives, to generally refrain from tax-supported subsidization of abortion. This is a question as to which we do understand that women and men of conscience and sincerity can differ (and not along lines of gender). We implore understanding, accordingly, for our view that funds identified as having been contributed by the United States to support the worthy activities of concerned international organizations not be dedicated to the termination of fetal life as a technique of family planning.

If the UNFPA can give appropriate assurances that this is its practice, the United States can continue to extend its financial support. We desire neither to mislead nor to equivocate. It should be understood that our determination to follow our conscience is as clear and strong as is our respect for the moral judgments and social solutions that others adopt -- as they too seek to enhance the quality of life, for themselves, and for all of humankind.

President Reagan, in that same statement, gave a summary of our views that captures the broad scope of our intended support, our statement of conscience, and our genuine interest in the welfare of all:

of this reference to Helms Amend plus RR's position, it seems accurate.

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Recognizing the seriousness of environmental and economic problems and their relationship to social realities, the United States places a priority upon technological advancement and economic expansion which hold out the hope of prosperity and stability for a rapidly changing world.

... We believe population programs can and must be truly voluntary, cognizant of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and families, and respectful of religious and cultural values. When they are, such programs can make an important contribution to economic and social development, to the health of mothers and children, and to the stability of the family and of society.

... Together we must strive for a world in which children are happy and healthy. They must have the opportunity to develop to their full mental and physical potential and, as young adults, be able to find productive work and to enjoy a decent and dignified existence.

We will strive, we will work, we will extend our aid. We too are of the Family of Man, and seek but to enhance our common humanity.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) calls for legal protection for children before birth as well as after birth. In keeping with this principle, the United States does not consider abortion an acceptable element of family planning programs and will no longer contribute to those of which it is a part. Accordingly, when dealing with nations which support abortion with funds not provided by the United States government, the United States will contribute to such nations through separate accounts which cannot be used for abortion. Moreover, the United States will no longer contribute to non-governmental organizations which perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning. With regard to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the U.S. will insist that no part of its contribution to the UNFPA be used for abortion, and will negotiate an arrangement to immediately implement this policy. The U.S. will also require concrete assurances that the UNFPA is not directly or indirectly engaged in abortion or coercive family planning programs; failing such assurances, the U.S. will consider further steps as appropriate under U.S. law.

DRAFT statement

For many years, the United States has supported, and helped to finance, programs of family planning, particularly in the less developed countries. This Administration has continued that support but has placed it within a policy context different from that of the past. It is sufficiently evident that the current exponential growth in global population cannot continue indefinitely. There is no question of the ultimate need to achieve a condition of population equilibrium. The differences that do exist concern the choice of strategies and methods for the achievement of that goal. The experience of the last two decades not only makes possible but requires a sharper focus for our population policy. It requires a more refined approach to problems which appear today in quite a different light than they did twenty years ago.

First and most important, in any particular society today, population growth is, of itself, a neutral phenomenon. It is not necessarily good or ill. It becomes an asset or a problem only in conjunction with other factors, such as economic policy, social constraints, need for manpower, and so forth. The

relationship between population growth and economic development is not a negative one. More people do not mean less growth; that is absurd on its face. Indeed, both in the American experience and in the economic history of most advanced nations, population growth has been an essential element in economic progress.

Before the advent of governmental population programs, several factors had combined to create an unprecedented surge in population over most of the world. Although population levels in many industrialized nations had reached or were approaching equilibrium in the period before the Second World War, the baby boom that followed in its wake resulted in a dramatic, but temporary, population "tilt" toward youth. The disproportionate number of infants, children, teenagers, and eventually young adults did strain the social infrastructure of schools, health facilities, law enforcement and so forth. It also sustained strong economic growth and was probably critical in boosting the American standard of living to new heights, despite occasionally counterproductive government policies.

Among the less developed nations, a coincidental population increase was caused by entirely different factors, directly related to the humanitarian efforts of the United States and

other western countries. A tremendous expansion of health services -- from simple inoculations to sophisticated surgery -- saved millions of lives every year. Emergency relief, facilitated by modern transport, helped millions to survive flood, famine, and drought. The sharing of technology, the teaching of agriculture and engineering, the spread of western ideals in the treatment of women and children all helped to drastically reduce the mortality rates, especially infant mortality, and to lengthen the life span.

The result, to no one's surprise, was more people, everywhere. This was not a failure but a success. It demonstrated not poor planning or bad policy but human progress in a new era of international assistance, technological advance, and human compassion. The population boom was a challenge; it need not have been a crisis. Seen in its broader context, it required a measured, modulated response. It provoked an overreaction by some, largely because it coincided with two negative factors which, together, hindered families and nations in adapting to their changing circumstances.

The first of these factors was governmental control of economies, a pathology which spread throughout the developing world with sufficient virulence to keep much of it from developing further. As economic decision-making was concentrated in the hands of planners and public officials, the ability of average men and women to work towards a better future was impaired, and sometimes crippled. Agriculture was devastated by government price fixing that wiped out rewards for labor. Job creation in infant industries was hampered by confiscatory taxes. Personal industry and thrift were penalized, while dependence upon the state was encouraged. Political considerations made it difficult for the economy to adjust to changes in supply and demand or to disruptions in world trade and finance. Under such circumstances, population growth changed from an asset in the development of economic potential to a peril.

One of the consequences of economic statism was that it disrupted the natural mechanism for slowing population growth in problem areas. The world's more affluent nations have reached a population equilibrium without compulsion and, in most cases, even before it was government policy to achieve it. The controlling factor in these cases has been the adjustment, by

individual families, of reproductive behavior to economic opportunity and aspiration. Economic freedom has led to economically rational behavior. As opportunities and the standard of living rise, the birth rate falls.

That historic pattern would already be well under way in many nations where population growth is today a problem, if short-sighted policies had not disrupted economic incentives, rewards, and advancement. In this regard, localized crises of population growth are evidence of too much government control and planning, rather than too little.

The second factor that turned the population boom into a crisis was confined to the western world. It was an outbreak of an anti-intellectualism, which attacked science, technology, and the very concept of material progress. Joined to a commendable and long overdue concern for the environment, it was more a reflection of anxiety about the unsettled times and the uncertain future and disregard of human experience and scientific sophistication. It was not unlike other waves of cultural anxiety that have, over the centuries, swept through western civilization during times of social stress and scientific exploration.

The combination of these two factors -- counterproductive economic policies in poor and struggling nations and a pseudo-scientific pessimism among the more advanced -- provoked the demographic overreaction of the 1960's and 1970's. Doomsday scenarios took the place of realistic forecasts, and too many governments pursued population control measures that have had little impact on population growth, rather than sound economic policies that create the rise in living standards historically associated with decline in fertility rates. It was the easy way out, and it did not work. It focused on a symptom and neglected the underlying ailments. For the last three years, this Administration has sought to reverse that approach. We recognize that, in some cases, immediate population pressures may make advisable short-term efforts to meliorate them. But this cannot be a substitute for the economic reforms that put a society on the road toward growth and, as an aftereffect, toward slower population increase as well.

Nor can population control substitute for the rapid and responsible development of natural resources. In responding to certain Members of Congress concerning the previous Administration's Global 2000 report, this Administration in 1981 repudiated its call "for more governmental supervision and control. Historically, that has tended to restrict the availability of resources and to hamper the development of technology, rather than to assist it. Recognizing the seriousness of environmental and economic problems, and their relationship to social and political pressures, especially in the developing nations, the Administration places a priority upon technological advance and economic expansion, which hold out the hope of prosperity and stability of a rapidly changing world. That hope can be realized, of course, only to the extent that government's response to problems, whether economic or ecological, respects and enhances individual freedom, which makes true progress possible and worthwhile."

Those principles underlie this country's approach to the United Nations Conference on Population to be held in Mexico City in

August. In accord with those principles, we reject compulsion or coercion in family planning programs, whether it is exercised against families within a society or against nations within the family of man.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) calls for legal protection for children before birth as well as after birth. In keeping with this principle, the United States does not consider abortion an acceptable element of family planning programs and will no longer contribute to those of which it is a part. Accordingly, when dealing with nations which support abortion with funds not provided by the United States government, the United States will contribute to such nations through separate accounts which cannot be used for abortion. Moreover, the United States will no longer contribute to non-governmental organizations which perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning. With regard to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the U.S. will insist that no part of its contribution to the UNFPA be used

for abortion, and will negotiate an arrangement to immediately implement this policy. The U.S. will also require concrete assurances that the UNFPA is not engaged in abortion or coercive family planning programs; failing such assurances, the U.S. will consider further steps as appropriate under U.S. policy.

Efforts to lower population growth in cases in which it is deemed advisable to do so must, moreover, respect the religious beliefs and culture of each society. Population control is not a panacea. It will not solve problems of massive unemployment.

Jobs are not lost because there are too many people in a given area. Jobs are created by the conjunction of human wants and investment capital. Population growth fuels the former; sound economic policies and properly directed international assistance can provide the latter. Indeed, population density may make the latter more feasible by concentrating the need for both human services and technology. But as long as oppressive economic policies penalize those who work, save, and invest, joblessness will persist.

Population control cannot solve problems of unauthorized migration across national boundaries. People do not leave their

homes, and often their families, to seek more space. They do so in search of opportunity and freedom. Reducing their numbers gives them neither. Population control cannot avert natural disasters, including famines provoked by cyclical drought. Fortunately, world food supplies have been adequate to relieve those circumstances in recent years. Problems of transportation remain; but there are far deeper problems as well, in those governmental policies which restrict the rewards of agricultural pursuits, encourage the abandonment of farmland, and concentrate people in urban areas.

It is time to put additional emphasis upon those root problems which frequently exacerbate population pressures. By focusing upon real remedies for underdeveloped economies, the United Nations Conference on Population can reduce demographic issues to their proper place. It is an important place, but not the controlling one. It requires our continuing attention within the broader context of economic growth and of the economic freedom that is its prerequisite.

U.S. support for family planning programs is based on two fundamental principles: enhancing human dignity and strengthening family life. These principles are reflected in our emphasis on

voluntarism and informed consent in the acceptance of family planning methods. Our objectives are to enhance the freedom of individuals in the exercise of responsible parenthood and to encourage population growth consistent with the growth of economic resources and productivity.

In our view this will be accomplished when couples are able to decide freely the size of their families. Since surveys show that only 40% of the population of developing countries has access to acceptable contraceptive information and materials, families now find it difficult to make their personal choice.

Our goal is to enhance personal choice. As a by-product, given accessible, acceptable and affordable services and adequate information and education, the aggregate result of such individual family decisions will be declining birth rate. Thus, our goals are increased accessibility of safe, effective and affordable family planning methods, goals we believe will result in a population growth that places less demands on the economic resources of developing nations. The focus, however, remains an individual choice.

In addition, this Administration has emphasized program areas

which represent valuable means of extending the accessibility and acceptability of voluntary family planning in developing countries.

For example, Contraceptive Social Marketing (CSM) involves the use of market distribution methods for family planning and has grown to about 10% of our population program. Typically, condoms and pills are introduced at the wholesale level at low cost so they can be distributed through the retail system of a country for ultimate consumer purchase. This means of distribution, using market mechanisms, ensures that the consumer has a choice of what to purchase and also extends the availability of contraceptives by increasing the number and coverage of outlets to serve those not adequately reached by other private or public sources. The U.S. has experienced great success using market distribution channels for contraceptives. In Bangladesh, for example, subsidized condoms and pills are available in over 50,000 retail locations throughout the country and sales of subsidized condoms in that country now exceed 80,000,000 a year and is the most rapidly growing family planning program in the country. In fact, market channels can serve remote rural areas more efficiently than government programs. This method, which

actually reduces the effective cost to governments of distribution, enhances voluntarism since the essence of a market sale is choice.

Another new area of emphasis has been natural family planning (NFP). It has increased ten-fold in this Administration. It is especially useful where cultural and religious values makes other methods of family planning unattractive to large parts of the population. Since the Bucharest Conference, substantial scientific progress has been made in NFP. The U.S. continues to sponsor research designed to further enhance our understanding of the process of human reproduction and is currently giving increased attention to the field delivery of natural family planning methods.

NFP is an important component of world-wide population assistance since it provides a method which is consistent with the cultural and religious values of many individuals.

In conclusion, questions of population growth require the approach outlined by President Reagan in 1981, in remarks before the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia: "Trust the people, trust their intelligence and trust their faith, because putting

people first is the secret of economic success everywhere in the world." That is the agenda of the United States for the United Nations Conference on Population this year, just as it remains the continuing goal of our family planning assistance to other nations.

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U.S. support for family planning programs is based on two fundamental principles: enhancing human dignity and strengthening family life. These principles are reflected in our emphasis on voluntarism and informed consent in the acceptance of family planning methods. Our objectives are to enhance the freedom of individuals in the exercise of responsible parenthood and to encourage population growth consistent with the growth of economic resources and productivity.

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