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1974: World Population Year

by Jyoti Shankar Singh, New York *

In December 1970, the General Assembly of the United Nations designated 1974 as World Population Year. Herewith, the Assembly was giving recognition to the growing involvement of the United Nations System in the population field and to the need for focussing international attention on different demographic aspects.

The responsibility for preparations for the World Population Year was given by the Economic and Social Council to Rafael M. Salas, Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. The Fund has established a small World Population Year secretariat to undertake the coordinating functions for the activities relating to the Year. The World Population Conference, which is to be held in Bucharest, Romania, from 19–30 August, 1974, will be the focal point of the Year's activities. This Conference, according to Resolution 1484 (XLVIII) of the Economic and Social Council, will be devoted to consideration of basic demographic problems, their relationship with economic and social development and population policies, and action programmes needed to promote human welfare and development.

Preparations for Bucharest

The Conference will consider a draft world population plan of action which is being prepared by a committee of experts under the direction of the United Nations Population Commission. To prepare for the Conference, a secretariat has been set up in the United Nations under the direction of Don Antonio Carrillo-Flores, former Foreign Minister and Finance Minister of Mexico. A Joint Working Group, consisting of the senior officers of the Conference staff, the United Nations Population Division, the Centre for Economic and Social Information and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, has been established in order to co-relate WPY and WPC activities. The Conference will consider a draft world population plan of action which is being prepared by a committee of experts, under the direction of the United Nations Population Commission.

The major objectives of the Year are to:

- Improve knowledge of and information on the facts concerning population trends and prospects, and the relevant associated factors;
- Sharpen awareness and heighten appreciation of population problems and their implications by individual governments, nongovernmental organizations, scientific institutions and the media;
- Provide effective education on population, family life and reproductive functions through formal and other educational systems;
- Stimulate discussion and thinking on alternative policies, promotion of demographic considerations in development planning, and development of policies and programmes in the population field which individual governments might wish to undertake;
- Expand international cooperation in population fields and supply increased and suitable technical assistance to countries desiring it, and in accordance with their needs.

A large number of projects relevant to the objectives of the World Population Year are already being undertaken by the United Nations, its specialized agencies, member governments and nongovernmental groups and institutions. These activities fall into four main categories: Research/Studies/Surveys; Conferences/Seminars/Meetings; Training and Formal and Nonformal Education; and Communication/Information Programmes.

The main thrust of the World Population Year programme has been directed towards encouraging and helping governments to initiate or expand national population activities and to establish the necessary administrative structures to handle them. More than forty-five countries have by now set up national population commissions or de-

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signed similar governmental authorities for this purpose. Activities planned by these bodies include national population seminars or conferences, national population day or week, special publications, films and audio-visual aids, essay contests and other types of competitions. Several governments have also designated substantive undertakings in the areas of research/studies/surveys, and training and education as World Population Year activities. It is anticipated that in many cases these commissions will continue to function as the focal centre for national population programmes and also provide the link with international activities long after the Year is over.

Role of Organisations and Mass Media

At the international level, the emphasis has been laid on establishing contact with several hundred national and international nongovernmental organizations and community groups, with a view to involving them actively in World Population Year programmes. Several international and regional activities sponsored by nongovernmental organizations and private groups have already taken place, as e.g. by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), Committee for International Coordination of National Research in Demography (CICRED), World Assembly of Youth (WAY), International Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN), International Education Development Inc. (IED), International Council of Women (ICW) and International Alliance of Women (IAW). More are planned for 1974. In promoting such activities, special consideration is being given to the role of religious groups and women's and youth organizations. Once again it is hoped that the working relationships built up in connection with WPY will continue to operate for the advancement of population work in the future.

The importance of the mass media in reaching the general public has been continuously kept in mind and UNFPA has not only maintained close contact with press, radio and TV organizations but also has sought to motivate writers, journalists and film makers among others to tell the population story. Articles and features on population questions, and on WPY, have been placed, at the initiative of the WPY Secretariat, in newspapers and magazines in both international and local languages; and radio and television stations have recorded and broadcast WPY-related programmes. An information dossier containing feature items, photos, and other graphic material is being distributed regularly to approximately 1500 newspapers and press agencies. Regional press organizations such as the Press Foundation of Asia which has been assisted by UNFPA and

ALACODE, which was set up with the support of UNFPA are playing the dual role of news gathering and news dissemination in their respective regions.

Information Policy

During 1974 the WPY Bulletin, which is part of the WPY communications programme designed to keep participants in the Year in touch with events and trends, will continue to appear on a regular basis in English, French and Spanish. Language versions are also being issued in Arabic and Romanian. The information dossier will be maintained as an article service for newspapers. A set of three articles was distributed in December, in relation to the launching of WPY, and similar sets of articles will be put together and distributed from time to time during 1974.

In regard to films, a number of projects have been developed by the United Nations and other members of the United Nations family including the production of fresh timely footage and tapes resulting from a series of film/radio missions covering Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. This footage and recorded material is being made available to organizations wishing to produce their own programmes.

To encourage the interest of media personnel, a series of conferences for editors and journalists are being held in different parts of the world. A major event of this kind will be a conference planned by the Sunday Times (London) in cooperation with UNFPA during April 1974. The central theme of this conference is "Exploding Cities". Approximately 100 newspapers and broadcasters, editors as well as scientists, demographers and economists have been invited to participate. The Sunday Times plans to issue a special colour supplement which will act as a working paper for the Conference. The Times of London also plans to issue a special supplement at the time of WPC.

Special Publications and Activities

Special publications related to the Year include a book by Dom Moraes entitled "A matter of people" which will be published in English in April 1974 and in several national language editions later in the Year. Another book, to be edited by Dom Moraes, will contain articles by 25 eminent historian poets, writers and public men stating their personal points of view on "the human condition". A compilation of basic documents of the UN system on population matters is to be issued during the Year. Another work titled "Population in the UN System: Developing the legal capacities and problems of UN Agencies"

is to be published shortly. Several specialized agencies including United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO) are issuing special population numbers of their magazines and journals as well as other publications with population emphasis.

The WPY Secretariat also participates extensively in WPY related meetings and conferences, assists in provision of speakers and resource material for such events, and coordinates many of the activities of this kind undertaken by various organizations and agencies. Main activities which will be supported during 1974 include the following:

National activities being implemented through national population commissions or similar governmental authorities. These will include seminars and conferences, special publications, postage stamps, and promotional and informational campaigns on population and development questions.

Information and communication programmes being carried out by specialized agencies in relation to WPY. These include publications, audio-visual aids, films, seminars, and support for governmental and nongovernmental activities, through their national associates.

A number of NGO activities during 1974, especially focussing on the role of youth, women and religious groups. A major point in these activities will be the Population Tribune 1974 which is to be organized by the Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC, at the time of the World Population Conference.

In general the activities undertaken within the context of WPY will contribute significantly to national, regional and international preparations for the highlight of the Year, the World Population Conference which is to take place in Bucharest from August 19–30, 1974. These activities, at the same time, are serving to strengthen ongoing population activities and to encourage the development of innovative programmes in the field of population.

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