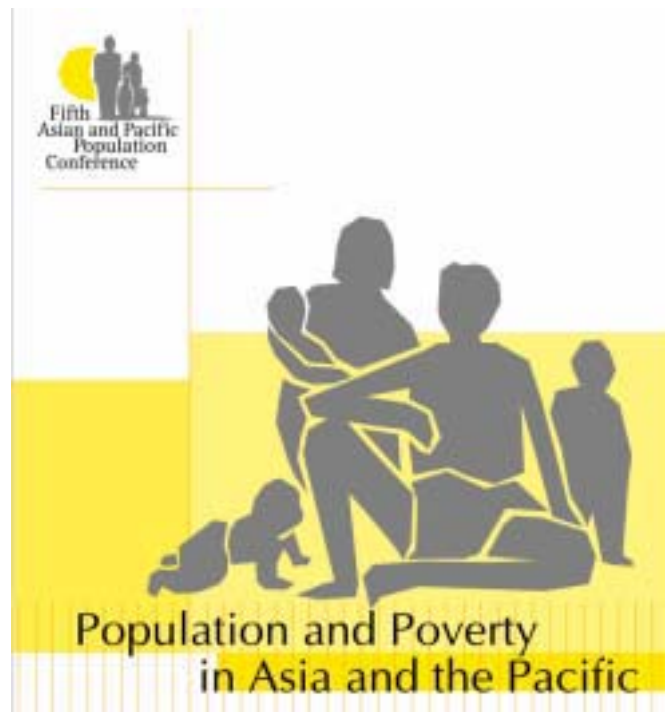


Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**Asian Population Studies Series No. 159**

# **Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference**

## **Report and Plan of Action on Population and Poverty**



**United Nations**

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# **REPORT OF THE FIFTH ASIAN AND PACIFIC POPULATION CONFERENCE**

## **I. ORGANIZATION**

1. The Ministerial Segment of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference was held at Bangkok on 16 and 17 December 2002. It was organized jointly by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

2. Representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP took part in both the Ministerial Segment and Senior Officials Segment of the Conference: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; France; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Netherlands; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam. A total of 26 ministers from 23 countries participated in the week-long Conference.

3. By virtue of rule 3 of the Commission's rules of procedure, representatives of Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Holy See, Italy, Sweden and Timor-Leste also attended.

4. Representatives of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic Commission for Africa attended in a consultative capacity.

5. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies attended: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Habitat).

6. Representatives of the following specialized agencies were present in a consultative capacity: International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization and World Bank.

7. The following intergovernmental organizations attended as observers: Asian Development Bank, Economic Cooperation Organization, European Union, International Organization for Migration, Mekong River Commission, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Partners in Population and Development.

8. Observers from the following non-governmental organizations were present in general consultative status: Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, HelpAge International, International Council of Women, International Movement ATD (Aide à Toute Détresse) Fourth World, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Rotary International. Observers from the following organizations in special consultative status also attended: Asian Women's Human Rights Council, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, Association of United Families International, Australian Council for Overseas Aid, David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Family Care International, Family Health International, International Council on Management of Population Programmes, International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, International Women's Health Coalition, International Women's Rights Action Watch, IPAS, Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning, Marie Stopes International, National Bar Association, National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Population Council and Swedish Association for Sex Education.

9. Representatives of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Committee for International Cooperation in National Research in Demography, Indian Committee of Youth Organizations, Population Action International, Shirkat Gah, Women's Resource Centre and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also attended.

### **A. Opening of the Ministerial Segment**

10. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP read out a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who observed that the region had made commendable progress in lowering fertility and mortality rates, increasing the longevity of women and men and reducing poverty through economic growth. However, much more needed to be done. Large numbers of people were still living in abject poverty, too many women and girls were kept out of the development process and illiteracy was thwarting efforts to achieve economic and social development. He stated that the millennium development goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, could not be achieved if the issues of population and reproductive health were not squarely addressed. Stronger efforts would have to be made to promote women's rights, and greater investment made in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning. Fortunately, a number of instruments were available to guide such development work, not only the millennium development goals, but also the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. He hoped that the present Conference would provide new impetus for the full and thorough implementation of those blueprints and thereby advance the population and development agenda for the twenty-first century.

11. In his own statement, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP stated that addressing population issues was integral to national efforts to alleviate poverty and accelerate social and economic development. Over the previous 40 years, ESCAP had played a central role in the field of population. It had initiated debate, it had provided a forum for discussion and it was assisting developing countries through regional population projects, technical assistance and advisory services, and training and information dissemination activities. In enumerating the many challenges that existed in the region, he acknowledged that they could not be confronted effectively unless the issues of population and reproductive health were dealt with. Yet there was hope because the Asian and Pacific region as a whole had a record of success in improving health and education levels and increasing life expectancy. He pointed out, however, that almost all the countries in South Asia lagged behind in terms of their fertility and infant, child and maternal mortality rates, as well as educational and employment opportunities for women. The Pacific island countries and territories, the least developed countries and the landlocked countries also faced special problems owing to their small size, geographical isolation and resource constraints. Noting that the Bali Declaration

on Population and Sustainable Development (adopted at the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 1992) and the ICPD Programme of Action had helped to ensure the success of the previous decade of work in the field of population and development, he was confident that the present Conference would create a fresh vision to guide future actions in the field.

12. In her address, the Executive Director of UNFPA observed that commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action was well reflected in the great advances made by many countries in the region in the areas of population in general and reproductive health and reproductive rights in particular. Such an expression of commitment would not have been complete and such advances would not have been achieved without partnership with parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The ICPD Programme of Action clearly stated the link between poverty and population; reinforcing the consensus and promoting its practical goals were the aim of the present Conference. After describing the progress achieved under the Programme of Action, she pointed out that there had been strong support for it from all quarters, across the political spectrum and in countries and communities with diverse cultures and religions. She further pointed out that the language of the ICPD Programme of Action was extremely clear: there was no hidden agenda, or any secret codes supporting abortion. Quoting the relevant paragraphs of the Programme of Action, she said: "In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning... Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion... Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process". The ICPD goals were absolutely essential to the achievement of seven of the eight millennium development goals. Promoting reproductive health and rights was indispensable for achieving economic growth and poverty reduction. She described the situation with regard to maternal mortality and morbidity, HIV/AIDS and changing demographics. In the context of HIV/AIDS and the reproductive health needs of adolescents, UNFPA was making young people a

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