

even representation in conference proceedings of the range of national views of population problems. It has been argued that the urgency of current world food-shortages makes the refusal to debate world-wide action to reduce population growth look irresponsible, even ludicrous. Did the rhetoric at Bucharest mean anything?

An important conclusion is that there are differing prescriptions for world's social and economic problems. The conference's de-emphasis of population control can easily be misread and over-generalized as the slogan "Look after development and population will look after itself". This may be true in thinly-populated countries, with natural resources. The danger exists, however, that other countries may be reluctant, in such an atmosphere, to take more direct measures. Yet the real message was that, in de-emphasizing the universality of population-control prescriptions, the intent was to gain greater balance — to emphasize instead that population policy consisted of a range of measures, both explicit and implicit. Each country must choose its own combination. Further elaboration of national and regional measures to implement the Plan of Action will be undertaken in each of the major regions early in 1975, when UN-sponsored regional consultations will be held.

Plainly, the results of the conference present dilemmas to aid agencies whose main objective is to provide family-planning assistance. These are tangible, direct programs, albeit based on Western ideas, which appeal to harried decision-makers looking for simple ways to reduce population growth. Emphasis by developing countries on the less-direct measures will be costly, both to population and development agencies. Resource-allocation decisions will become more difficult. In addition, demands will be made on budgets for research, and for other pressing population problems, particularly those relating to rapid movements into cities, human settlements, and problems of infertility. Resources are also needed to set up population units to facilitate long-overdue integration of population considerations into development planning. If there is to be greater national commitment to solving population problems, every country must relate population to resources in a much wider sense than they are doing now.

#### **The Canadian role**

Canada's statement to the conference, presented by the Honourable Jeanne Sauvé, was balanced and thoughtful. It indicated Canada's appreciation of some of the complex issues debated in the conference

arising from the interrelations among population factors and development, natural resources, the environment and the family. The statement recognized several important principles: that population factors were closely related to other aspects of development and that measures to influence or contend with population trends involved structural and institutional change; that we must seek greater efficiency in resource utilization in national production and consumption activities; that fundamental human freedoms must be observed in the formulation of population policy. It was also pointed out that Canada would be willing to assume its share of the responsibility for meeting increased needs for international population assistance following the conference.

Let us hope these words were not mere rhetoric, designed for public consumption at the time of the conference. As a result of the conference preparations, Canadians increased their understanding of population policy. Now we must build on the experience to shape a coherent set of domestic policies.

As Mme Sauvé pointed out, a crucial factor in the success of the conference lies in the follow-up activities. There is as yet little evidence of these in Canada. Before the conference, a preparatory exercise, lasting more than six months, included federal interdepartmental, federal-provincial and public consultations. A number of Cabinet-commissioned studies of aspects of Canadian population are under way, and it would have been improper to expect the conference to precipitate the formulation of domestic policy. But the preparatory activities created for the first time a mechanism for consultation among the many federal departments with population-related concerns. This process of consultation must not be allowed to die after the conference. Instead, it must become focused more on substantive questions of domestic policy that fall into two major areas: those that influence population events and those that contend with population trends. The Plan of Action recommends that each country create and place "at a high level of the national administrative structure" a unit dealing with population aspects of policy. Surely the time is overdue for the creation of co-ordinating mechanism in Canada. Its location should be strategic, so that it can co-ordinate relevant policies in different departments, monitor trends and provide consultation to the provinces.

The lack of priority accorded domestic policy constrains the role we can play on the international scene at a time when

*Follow up  
crucial  
to success  
of conference*