

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON POPULATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

HELD AT AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

Hon. Lorna Marsden rose, pursuant to notice of Tuesday, November 28, 1989:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-First Century, held at Amsterdam, Netherlands, from 6th to 9th November, 1989.

She said: Honourable senators, I wish to report to you briefly on an important debate which took place last month on the prospects for population issues in the next century and the steps which must be taken to deal creatively and fairly with the situation that faces us.

Let us take a brief look at the situation. In the next generation, in about 30 years, at current rates the world's total population will grow by close to three billion people. In 1987 the world celebrated the birth of the five billionth human being, and the world's population was growing at a rate of 88 million people per year. Only two years later the rate is close to 91 million per year. In 1998 we can expect the six billionth inhabitant of the earth to be born—one year sooner than was projected in 1987—and in the year 2025 the world's population is now expected to be 8.5 billion. By current projections, perhaps a century from now the world will level off at 10 billion people or more.

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The important issue here, especially for those of us in this sparsely populated, rich country, is that 94 per cent of those 97 million people who will be born in the world in the next ten years will be born in developing countries. Of those 42 countries with annual growth rates of over 3 per cent, 24 are in Africa and 10 are in the Middle East. By the end of the century those under the age of 25 will comprise nearly 42 per cent of the world's total population, and these are, of course, highly dependent people. Those between the ages of 0 and 14 must be fed, educated, given health care, clothing and shelter, and a large part of the burden for that support will be carried by those 15 to 24 years of age.

One could go on discussing these figures at length, but the impact on the major issues which face us, for example, the environment, are clear. You can appreciate that at a forum, such as the one on which I am now reporting, the concept of sustainable development takes on a new and very urgent meaning, because we talk not only about environmental and economic growth but about a development strategy that has among its primary objectives the link between population programs and health, education, housing and employment as well as economic growth.

So the purpose of the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-First Century, which was held in Amsterdam from November 6 to 9, 1989, sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund and the Government of the Netherlands, was to come to some agreement upon how these problems must be

faceted. Dr. Nafis Sadik, president of the UNP Fund, was the leading organizer and co-chairman of the forum.

The forum took place in the beautiful Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, and we were honoured to have been addressed by many distinguished speakers. The conference was attended by senior ministers and officials from 79 countries, as well as 20 United Nations agencies and organizations, 6 intergovernmental organizations, 32 nongovernmental organizations and 16 academic and training institutions. These are the people for whom our development and aid efforts are of great significance and the people through whose work we achieve our objectives throughout the world.

I attended as a member of the United Nations Fund for Population Activity Advisory Panel on Women, Population and Development, on which I have served since it began four years ago. It was noted by everyone that our country did not send a minister or other political representative. Instead, we were represented by a highly able official of CIDA, Dr. Linda Demers. While she did a splendid job of representing our country in her formal presentation and in the hard work she accomplished in the corridors, nonetheless, there was a note of bitterness among the senior ministers who attended from the developing countries about the absence of a high level political representative from a donor country such as Canada. This fact must be noted, and I hope that the Secretary of State for External Affairs will be able to ensure that Canada is more fully represented at the donor advisory meetings coming up in February, which is why I wanted to speak today.

Not only were we addressed not only by the Queen of the Netherlands at the final plenary session where the Amsterdam Declaration was announced, but we were also addressed by the Honourable Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Mr. Willie Brandt of West Germany, Dr. Joseph C. Wheeler of the OECD Development Assistance committee, of which Canada is a member, the Minister for Development and Cooperation of the Netherlands, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy of the U.S.A., as well as by the senior representatives of the 79 countries attending.

In particular, I wish to draw the attention of the Senate to the speech of Mr. McGeorge Bundy. In the 1984 Mexico World Population Conference, to which I led the Canadian delegation, representatives of many countries showed a willingness to politicize population issues. Happily, this was absent from the Amsterdam forum. At the Mexico World Population Conference, the USA took a hard-line position on the funding of population programs in case they might offer abortion among the many family planning services for women in the developing countries. Since the U.S. remains the largest donor to family planning programs, this has meant an obstacle in bureaucratic and funding programs. What was remarkable about Mr. Bundy's speech was the candour with which he commented on the role that his own country has played. He said:

What I want to discuss is the impact on worldwide population programs of the American debate during the 1980s over abortion. I will begin with the good news—that impact has been limited—and go on to a rather more