



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 December 2016

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-fifth session

1-10 February 2017

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by World Information Transfer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

World Information Transfer, Inc (WIT) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation promoting environmental health and literacy. In 1987, inspired by the Chernobyl nuclear tragedy, WIT was formed in recognition of the pressing need to provide accurate, actionable information about our deteriorating global environment and its effect on human health. WIT advances this mission through various programs and publications. Since 1989, the World Ecology Report, a quarterly digest has been in distribution throughout the developing and developed world. Additionally, since 1992, WIT's annual conference at the UN, Health and Environment: Global Partners for Global Solutions, presents scientific papers by international experts on growing clinical evidence supporting the link between a degrading environment and its effect on human health.

Healthy people in a healthy environment in all its forms and dimensions are an indispensable objective of WIT — one that is inextricably linked with the elimination of poverty and destruction of the environment. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that aims to eliminate the yoke of poverty and to heal and secure the planet for future generations, World Information Transfer highlights one simple prerogative that addresses the heart of this global challenge — curtailing global population growth.

Global human population expands around 75 million annually, or 1.1% per year. The global population has grown from 1 billion in 1800 to 7 billion in 2012. This number will keep increasing, and estimates have put the total population by mid-2030 - at 8.4 billion and, 9.6 billion by mid-2050. In tandem with this evidence, we now also have corroborative evidence that reflects a causal relationship between rampant population growth and standards of living. Nation-states with low standards of living and high rates of poverty have rapid population growth, while nations with high standards of living have low rates of population growth. These population trends and dynamics have an enormous effect on prospects for poverty reduction and sustainable development. Therefore, World Information Transfer highlights the importance through two cross-cutting recommendations:

Firstly, from the perspective of reproductive health and poverty eradication, World Information Transfer, through its publications and conferences, has been championing for greater prioritisation of reproductive health, such as family planning and education of girls, as an effective method to control the population dynamic. Improved reproductive health not only reduces mortality rates of women and infants, but also helps produce healthy infants, upon whom families can allocate greater resources such as education and who eventually can become productive members in their communities. This provides greater chances of breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Secondly, from the perspective of population growth and distribution on the sustainability of the world's resources, World Information Transfer, highlights this nexus through its direct effect on (a) Food Production and (b) Water Resource Management.

Food Production

Meeting the increasing demand for food has led to the greater use of fertilisers and pesticides in agricultural activity throughout the world. This process results in the contamination of land, water and air and makes land vulnerable to wind and water erosion. Misguided irrigation practices can mean an increase in soil salinity and a greater demand on irreplaceable groundwater. Also, chemical runoff from fertilisers and pesticides damage ground water resources. Non-industrial farming or traditional agriculture that continues to intensify in less developed countries often involves the cultivation of fragile soils that are difficult to farm, such as drylands, highlands, and forests. When farmland expands toward fragile lands in order to keep pace with the needs of a growing population in a region, it leads to deforestation, erosion, and desertification. World Information Transfer recommends solving food insecurity through greater emphasis on creating robust legislation on food distribution. Currently, world food production has kept pace with the growing population. Yet, millions of people are hungry. Therefore, the strategy is not to use chemical compounds to bolster production — but to have proper channels of distribution. Food insecurity is often a result of the unavailability of food, insufficient purchasing power, inappropriate distribution, or inadequate use of food at the household level.

Water Resource Management

Population growth and distribution have always been linked to the availability of fresh water and the sustainability of renewable water resources. Over the last 50 years, the demand for water has grown significantly — not only because of an increase in global population, but also because of an increase in the usage of water in households, agriculture and industrial processes and production. However, the situation remains that a significant number of the world's population lack access to an adequate source of clean water. Moreover, in certain less developed countries, more than one-half of the population lives without any or remote access to safe drinking water. Water shortages and polluted waters lead to food insecurity and major health problems among the world's poorest. Additionally, water resources do not concede to territorial borders that govern nation-states and does not stop at national boundaries. The pollution and contamination of water upstream, not only reduces water flow for countries downstream, but also poses grave health problems. The future of the world's water resources, thus, depends on improving management policies and practices globally.

For the Statement for the 55th Session of the Commission for Social Development, World Information Transfer highlights the effect of population growth on health, food and water security as they are the most fundamental social development instruments that create societies. Poverty is not a chronic disease that cannot be eradicated through effective treatment. Population growth has a direct bearing on social development as it affects the most basic, fundamental building blocks that can progress societies and eradicate poverty. With planned parenthood, greater allocation of family resources on raising children can be invested in providing them nutrition and education. Additionally, stable population growth will put less demand on the world's resources and in turn reduce global chemical levels in both food and water.