



Joint Position Statement from Horn of Africa Civil Society Organisations

Population Growth and Climate Change

Kampala, Uganda, 14th September 2010

We the participants of Population and Climate Change Conference gathering at Commonwealth Resort Hotel Munyonyo Kampala Uganda from 13th -14th September 2010, representing nine nations in the Horn of Africa, a region among the most affected by climate change, and among the least responsible for anthropogenic Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Deeply concerned by the importance of population to climate change, and havoc wrecked by climate change and variability on the Horn of African population, with increasing poverty, food insecurity, deterioration of health and a general decline of people's welfare among many other problems.

Noting that 37 of 41 National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) identify rapid population growth as an issue that exacerbates the effects of climate change and hinders their ability to adapt.

Further noting the view of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population Report (2009) that climate change is more than an issue of energy efficiency or industrial carbon emissions, but also an issue of population dynamics, poverty and gender equity.

Acknowledging the Key Recommendation of the Global Humanitarian Forum 2009 that *population stabilisation should become a priority for sustainable development*.

Recognising that rapid population growth: increases total carbon emissions, especially in developed countries; increases the number of victims requiring adaptation measures, especially women in developing countries; inhibits economic development, notably in the least developed countries; thus *exacerbates all problems of both mitigation and adaptation*; and can be countered cost-effectively by meeting the unmet need for reproductive health care; by women's empowerment, gender-equality, and the right to family planning; and by non-coercive population policies in all countries.

We urgently seek to draw attention to the *omission in international negotiations*, of the issue most critical to our future risk exposure and adaptation capacity in the Horn of Africa. Climate change is one of a number of factors, which impede development efforts and

undermine the rights, dignity, livelihoods, health, security and natural resource base of our people. The issue most pervasively underlying this struggle is population growth. The high and unsustainable rate of growth in Horn of Africa countries not only undermine our capacity to lift people out of poverty and to manage natural resources sustainably, it will also increase the toll of future climate change victims.

Aware that Population Growth:

- is on track to triple food demand in our region by 2080, while our agricultural capacity is predicted to decline by 12 – 22% as a result of climate change;
- increases the fragmentation and degradation of our land resource, and the biodiversity it supports, reducing resilience to weather anomalies;
- increases migration to urban slums and refugee camps, with higher health and personal security risks, and increased dependence on fossil energy, including for food aid;
- places people in the path of climate disasters in inappropriately located and inadequately constructed settlements;
- increases unemployment, insecure employment, labour exploitation and income inequality, limiting future prospects for our youth;
- creates a high dependency ratio limiting economic productivity;
- outpaces infrastructure provision diminishing average access to utilities and social services like education and health care;
- undermines empowerment of women and their participation in economic activities;
- makes it hard to achieve all Millennium Development Goals, especially those related to child and maternal health;
- perpetuates the vicious cycle of poor educational attainment leading to low economic capacity and high fertility.

Yet it has been repeatedly demonstrated that *culturally appropriate, non-coercive family planning programs can break this cycle* even among poor and illiterate communities, and that such programs have been an indispensable component of development in all non-oil-producing nations that have transitioned to higher

socioeconomic prosperity in the last half century. Providing universal access to reproductive health care and family planning programs is a goal embedded within the Millennium Development Goals and the Programme of Action resulting from the International Conference on Population and Development, signed by 189 countries in Cairo in 1994. But commitment to this goal has not yet been sufficient to stem the decline. The unmet demand for birth control grows annually, but the resources to meet it have shrunk.

We appeal to change the perception and false arguments that drawing attention to population growth is a distraction from Western over-consumption, and an attempt to blame climate change on the poor. Per capita emissions have not increased in developed countries in the past forty years - population growth has been the primary driver of their emissions growth. Yet some still actively promote it, requiring ever greater per capita emissions reductions to achieve even the current inadequate targets. For the developing world, the issue is not blame, but protection from harm. Therefore, all growing nations should address population growth within their climate change response.

We ask for renewed international commitment and support to uphold women's dignity and their right to informed reproductive choice. Adequate support for such measures will immediately benefit the health and well-being of women and families, and by slowing

population growth, will contribute to realizing the rights of our children to inherit sufficient resources on which to live.

We demand that United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations include population issues and concern prominently in the text, acknowledging that population growth globally is responsible for increasing the number of carbon emitters and the number of climate change victims.

We strongly urge integration of voluntary interventions to stabilize population into national climate change plans, including National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). Population growth, like climate change, is a complex issue that requires an integrated response on a number of fronts. Particularly in rapidly growing nations, non-coercive population measures, including through family planning and other actions to reduce unintended pregnancy such as girl's education, women's empowerment and a focus on youth, should be included in harmonized adaptation strategies and national development plans.

We trust that these measures will lead to renewed international commitment and funding for the voluntary family planning, reproductive health and community education, on which the future welfare of our people, particularly our women and children, depend.

Signed by:

