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3 September 2018 | Draft

Prohibition of Reference to Overpopulation of the Planet Draft Proposal for an International Convention

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Produced in anticipation of debate by the UN General Assembly (December 2018) on the proposed *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, and in the light of the previous *United Nations Global Compact* (2000) on corporate social responsibility, and **criticism thereof** with respect to enabling globalization

Preamble

It can be readily argued that many conventional crises are a consequence of increasing population -- unemployment, environmental degradation, access to food and water resources, failing social security services, disease, inaccessibility of education, refugees, security threats, violence, waste, and the like. Such arguments derive primarily from marginal groups and are readily deprecated. Their presentation however introduces a further destabilizing dynamic into societies already faced with instability and the challenge of achieving sustainability.

This pattern has already been recognized to a degree and has given rise to informal measures to restrict reference to the challenge of overpopulation wherever possible. There is however a need to formalize this understanding in order to clarify any ambiguity which may give rise to unnecessary confusion and panic through the dissemination of fake news regarding the purported dangers of overpopulation. Appropriate sanctions call for articulation.

These concerns could be readily associated with elaboration of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (GCM).

This is being developed as a consequence of the first meeting of Heads of State and Government to discuss, at the global level within the UN General Assembly, issues related to migration and refugees (19 September 2016). This sent an important political message that migration and refugee matters have become major issues in the international agenda. In adopting the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (13 September 2016), the 193 UN Member States recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to human mobility and enhanced cooperation at the global level. However, as in that framing articulation, it is vital that reference to overpopulation should be excluded from any final agreement.

Recognizing:

1. Religion: The scriptures and spiritual teachings of the major religions of the world make no reference to the problematic consequences of overpopulation and indeed are consistent with the formulation favoured by the Abrahamic religions: *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth* (*Genesis 1-28*). With that mandate, religions are consequently appropriately encouraged to promote the birth rates of their adherents and those they aspire to convert. Constraint on population growth is therefore legitimately held to be tantamount to blasphemy, and therefore to be sanctioned accordingly.
2. Labour requirements: The aging populations of developed countries call for a sustained approach to increasing their numbers, whether to provide essential labour for business and other services currently unable to fill vacant positions, or to ensure care for the increasing proportion of the elderly. Such requirements notably extend to the military and security services in anticipation of future social unrest.
3. Need for consumers: Economies and business enterprises, dependent for their health on continuous growth and market development, have a fundamental need for an expanding pool of consumers.
4. Human rights: Reproduction is a fundamental human right which it is totally inappropriate to call into question in any way.
5. Discrimination: Any suggestion that increase in population should be constrained, especially in underprivileged countries with a high birth rate, is fundamentally discriminatory. Suggestions to the contrary recall the imperial abuses of colonialism, if not the more extreme ideologies of fascism and eugenics -- especially when proposed constraints impact most on the poorest segments of the population.
6. Culture: Individuals in many cultures, notably those with the highest birth rates, tend to associate their identity, self-esteem and status with larger families -- the larger the better. Constraints on reproduction are therefore an inappropriate criticism of modalities

to which fundamental significance is attached. It merits recognition as a form of cultural violence.

7. Politics: Political ideologies and platforms responsive to the "will of the people", and the pressures for re-election, must necessarily reflect the need for population increase in their policies, however implicitly -- especially those with a populist bias
8. Humanitarian: The condition of those in extremely deprived circumstances evokes a healthy global caring response, a valuable dimension of the global conscience, which would otherwise be inhibited.
9. Collective learning: Given the undeclared commitment to unconstrained increase in population, it is clearly appropriate to allow the trend to evoke whatever consequences will enable new dimensions of collective learning appropriate to that situation.

Noting:

1. Arguments have already been well-developed to the effect that overpopulation is a myth -- even a dangerous myth -- unsubstantiated by any adequate evidence and readily associated with vested interests with questionable agendas.
2. Although unconstrained reproduction is a fundamental human right, as implied by the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948), it is completely inappropriate to draw inferences to the contrary from the fact that the global population was 2.4 billion at that time, whereas 50 years later it is now 7.6 billion, and is predicted to be between 10 and 13 billion by the end of the century.
3. Authorities, notably at the regional or international level, already cultivate implicit internal policies to avoid reference to overpopulation and its consequences -- whether or not this is also clarified in guidelines of any form.
4. Mass media, whether local, national or international, already avoid reference to overpopulation and its consequences -- whether as a result of pressure from political sponsors, funders, advertisers, lobbies, readership, or recommendations from government -- however articulated.
5. Research through think tanks and academic institutions already carefully avoids more than passing reference to population growth as a factor of significance ([Confronting the Global Forced Migration Crisis](#), May 2018). This has been notably relevant in relation to climate change through the appropriately selective consideration of that dimension in the [Kaya Identity \(Introduction. In Climate Change 2007: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC\)](#). This crafting of concern contrasts with that of the early study for the Club of Rome, now to be deemed completely irresponsible (Paul Ratner. [In 1973, an MIT computer predicted the end of civilization: so far, it's on target](#), *Big Think*, 23 August 2018).
6. Funding agencies are already assiduous in avoiding any assistance to programs of research or aid which can be interpreted as a controversial constraint on birth rates.
7. Undertaking initiatives in favour of constraints on population growth is already recognized as guaranteed to undermine opportunities for institutional development, as well as for the individual career advancement of those associated with that process
8. Governments and other institutions faced with a variety of pressing challenges are already resigned to the fact that "population growth" is a reality to be accepted -- and about which nothing effective can be appropriately done. References to its cumulative consequence as "overpopulation" are therefore to be avoided. This sense of reality includes the recognition that pressures on migration from countries with high birth rates will be unstoppable for the foreseeable future because of the disadvantageous conditions experienced there. The flow of migrants will in all probability continue to increase although reference to this is avoided.
9. Governments and funding agencies already have a marked tendency to withdraw support from institutions highlighting issues relating to overpopulation and birth control. Increasingly these take the form of measures effectively to be recognized as sanctions on such initiatives.
10. Challenges to the governability of societies are widely experienced, as a consequence of their increasing complexity and the variety of disruptive processes. It is however completely inappropriate to suggest that population growth exacerbates ungovernability in any manner.

Agreement by Signatory States:

1. Religions should not be subject in any way to criticism for their promotion of larger families, opposition to abortion or birth control -- and to natalism, especially when faced with pressures from other religions.
2. Political programs should avoid any reference to overpopulation as a constraint on the implementation of their policies towards full employment, economic growth, security, and sustainability -- whether in the short term or the longer term.
3. Business corporations should in no way be subject to sanctions for strategies encouraging larger families as a means of ensuring both market development and the labour force to meet the resulting needs for production.
4. Advocacy groups promoting policies in relation to population constraint in any form should be strongly discouraged by whatever means possible, if not prohibited. As with disruptive political ideologies, apologists for such perspectives should be similarly constrained.
5. Research, notably through think tanks, should avoid including population growth as a factor for consideration in elaborating fruitful strategic policies for consideration by government. Foresight studies and statistical reporting should minimize reference to future population growth and any conclusions that might otherwise be drawn from it -- most notably with respect to migration pressures.
6. Documentation systems and libraries should reclassify or withdraw materials on any challenges explicitly framed as arising from overpopulation -- treating them as is done with highly controversial and deprecated themes (fascism, pornography, blasphemy, and the like). Publishers should be strongly discouraged from producing materials reflecting this questionable concern.
7. Media and search engines should subject materials referring to overpopulation to the patterns of censorship already in place, or envisaged with respect to misleading advertising and fake news.
8. Entertainment and comedy should be strongly discouraged from making reference to overpopulation as a matter of concern, especially in the light of widespread past protest regarding perceptions of blasphemy.
9. Legislation should be envisaged at the national, regional or international level to provide a formal framework for this prohibition. With respect to the proposed framework to be provided by the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), it is

vital that no mention should be made of overpopulation in taking into account all dimensions of the migration/refugee issue for the foreseeable future, as with the articulation of the preliminary *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (13 September 2016).

10. Withdrawal of accreditation and appropriate sanctions should be envisaged in the event of failure to respect these strategic principles. Beyond the conventional use of injunctions, consideration should be given to the use of superinjunctions to reduce attention to these provisions in order to avoid exacerbation of global insecurity.

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