

DECLARATION ON POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT

We are young people of diverse geographic, ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds from all regions of the world. We recognize that authentic development is a consequence and an affirmation of the dignity of the person. Authentic development is a process that takes place at all levels of society, creating a social, political, and economic environment that allows persons to reach their full physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional potential. People must be responsible stewards of the environment. People should live harmoniously with the planet for their mutual flourishing and not at each other's expense.

The world is a source of beauty and sustenance. We depend on the planet for most of our fundamental needs, which include access to clean water and sanitation, nutrition, basic health care, housing, and education, and we must ensure that everyone can meet these needs while preserving our environment for future generations. We affirm the need for greater intergenerational solidarity in the effort towards the preservation of our shared home.

Recognizing that irresponsible actions can lead to environmental degradation, we must foster responsible stewardship in every society. Each human being is called to recognize his or her personal responsibility, which springs from the intrinsic value and inherent dignity of each human person. Responsible stewardship is the personal commitment to care for both earth and neighbor. We affirm that responsible stewardship begins in the family and extends to both local and global communities.

Human beings are the earth's greatest source of potential solutions for authentic development. Their unlimited creative capacities, a reflection of their inherent dignity, enable persons to harness the knowledge and skills which drive authentic development. When we ensure every human has their fundamental needs met, we are equipping people to be creative problem solvers. Governments should support people through just laws, institutions, infrastructures, and decent working conditions. Having those needs met helps people become agents of authentic development.

We affirm that each of us possesses the capacity to improve our natural environment. We view population growth not as a threat, but as an opportunity to meet the challenges of a changing world with innovation and invention. Population management programs that categorize human beings, especially vulnerable populations, as burdens, are incompatible with human dignity.

We affirm that human flourishing is the ultimate goal of authentic development. Responsible, fact-based policies, respectful of human dignity, should be promoted to address environmental degradation such as climate change, as well as demographic imbalances, such as declining birth rates. We stand in solidarity with all people from both developed and developing nations, in affirming that responsible stewardship of the earth is the duty of each person. We invite civil society, governments, international, and educational institutions to join us in these efforts.