

Opposition mounts to U.N. Beijing conference agenda

by Marianna Wertz

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) will open on Sept. 4-15 in Beijing, and the precursor "Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum on Women '95" is scheduled on Aug. 30-Sept. 8 in a suburb of Beijing, which is expected to be attended by some 35,000 NGO delegates. The importance of this conference in furthering the radical ecologist-malthusian agenda of the United Nations and its British backers, is evident in the mountains of press statements flooding out from every environmental sewer, demanding that "reactionary forces" not spoil the "commitment of the world's nations" to enforcement of the twin goals of population reduction and "sustainable development"—the politically correct word for stopping industrial development.

The FWCW is the latest in a series of international conferences on issues of population and development, sponsored by the United Nations, whose purpose is to promote depopulation and deindustrialization, under the cover of "humanitarian concern" and women's "empowerment." The conferences began in 1974, with the first U.N. World Population Conference, in Bucharest, Romania. Last year's International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, has been claimed by the radical malthusians as the "great compromise conference," where opponents of depopulation policies allegedly agreed to population stability and "sustainable development" as necessary global objectives. The Beijing conference, according to this view, is supposed to further implement the objectives agreed to in Cairo. In fact, the Cairo conference was a fierce battleground between the depopulation forces and the combined opposition of the Vatican, Muslims, developing nations, and the Schiller Institute, which succeeded in preventing the worst of the genocidal policies from being written into the final draft.

In this fight, several international and American-based Muslim organizations have openly criticized the Draft Agenda for Action, to be debated in Beijing, joining the opposition expressed against the draft in June by the Vatican. (See *EIR*, June 23, 1995, for background on the draft agenda's contents.) Most importantly, on Aug. 22, Egypt's influential Islamic institution Al-Azhar strongly attacked the draft agenda, saying it contradicted religion and aimed to destroy the family. In a statement published in several Egyptian newspapers, Al-Azhar said that the conference "aimed

at creating a new kind of life which is against religious values and destroys moral barriers and deeply rooted traditions."

On Aug. 18, four Muslim organizations convened a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to denounce the draft agenda. The participating organizations were the Muslim World League, International Muslim NGO Caucus, International Islamic Council for Daw'a & Relief—Women and Children's Committee, and National Association of Muslim Women. They were joined by the Concerned Women of America, who also oppose the draft agenda.

In their separate but overlapping statements, the Muslim organizations objected to what they call the draft's "hidden agenda," which prioritizes population reduction over economic development, and reduces the importance of the woman's role in raising a family (see *Documentation*).

The combined statement of the Islamic Society of North America and the Council on American-Islamic Relations challenged one of the key false assumptions in the U.N.'s policy outlook, stating, "There [are] no conclusive data proving that poverty or the lack of economic progress, or the inequitable treatment of women within a society, is based on population growth."

All the Muslim organizations opposed the key Beijing agenda concept of "empowerment" of women—the central theme of the conference—as leading to a "vicious circle of competition between men and women." They propose to substitute the concept of "responsibility" equally shared by men and women. In this context, they stated that "countries should avoid becoming dependent on a female workforce," since this discourages family formation.

This view contrasts sharply with the policy of the "Conservative Revolution" advocates in the U.S. Congress and many U.S. state governments, who have been rewriting welfare law to demand that female recipients with children be forced to work.

Finally, the Muslim spokesmen denounced the hideous use by the Serbian aggressors of rape against Muslim women in the war in the Balkans, and called for international action to stop it.

EIR intervenes

This reporter confronted the leadership of the U.S. delegation to Beijing in a nationwide telephone press conference

on Aug. 23, challenging the premises of the Beijing draft agenda and citing founding editor Lyndon LaRouche's call for the United States to withdraw from the United Nations, which he accuses of complicity in genocide.

The radical malthusian Pew Charitable Stewardship Initiative hosted the hour-long press conference, on the topic "United States Policy and the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women," with three speakers who will lead the U.S. delegation to Beijing: Geraldine Ferraro, vice chair, and U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Commission; Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky, deputy chair, and former member of Congress from Pennsylvania; and Tim Wirth, alternate chair and alternate head, and Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs. Fourteen news organizations, including Reuters, Voice of America, and Christian press outlets, participated.

Pew spokesman Susan Sechler opened the press conference stating that Pew's objective is to "reduce global population growth and use of sustainable resources." Ferraro and Margolies-Mezvinsky made nominal statements about the importance of Beijing for women. Wirth identified himself as representing the State Department and the Clinton administration, and said the U.S. policy in Beijing will be fourfold: to 1) preserve gains in human rights won at the Vienna conference; 2) preserve the gains won at the Cairo "Conference on Population and Sustainability" (sic); 3) advance the economic involvement of women; and 4) work against violence against women. He dismissed any opposition to the draft agenda as "old and tired," and said the world wants to move ahead.

This reporter was called on fifth, and she directed her question to Wirth: "On Aug. 18, several Muslim organizations held a press conference in Washington, D.C. in which they objected to what they called the Draft Platform of Action's 'hidden agenda,' saying there is no conclusive proof that poverty or the lack of economic progress is based on population growth, and urging that economic development be prioritized over population control. The Vatican has urged the same policy. Lyndon LaRouche, who founded EIR News Service, has charged that the U.N.'s policy, as evidenced in Bosnia, is aiding and abetting genocide. LaRouche has called on the U.S. to withdraw from the U.N. and has supported President Clinton's attempts to steer the U.S. away from British colonial objectives. Don't you think the U.S. would be better served by this policy than pursuing the objectives in the draft agenda?"

Wirth responds

Wirth responded in a haughty and angry tone: "The U.S., this administration, has no intention of following the agenda laid out by Lyndon LaRouche in any way, shape, or form." Speaking for a Clinton administration whose policies are not as radically malthusian as his, Wirth said, "We do intend to work very closely with the Vatican and most Muslim countries who joined together in Cairo about the sense of urgency

about the need to stabilize the world's population, about the need to empower women, and about the need to recognize and encourage the needs of all individuals. We also believe that international organizations like the United Nations are important. They need to be changed, they need to be streamlined, reformed in the post-Cold War era, just like most other governmental institutions, but to throw them out is to deny the fact that the world is coming closer together in trade, economics, communications, and so on."

Documentation

The following are excerpts from statements by Muslim organizations at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on Aug. 18. From the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), and United Nations Project Group:

There is no conclusive data proving that poverty or the lack of economic progress, or the inequitable treatment of women within a society, is based on population growth. . . .

Economic development in underdeveloped countries should be an international priority. International economic schemes that violate the sovereign rights of governments over natural resources and/or that seek to exploit the labor of the indigenous population should be discouraged. . . .

Care should be taken to prevent the underdeveloped nations of the world from becoming the cheap labor pools that support the new global economy. International manufacturing and labor standards must be developed, implemented and enforced. . . .

The Draft Platform language on the vocational training for rural women lends itself to abuse because it targets rural women for training in vocational, "sweat shop" skills that are only marketable in home-based businesses.

From the statement by the Muslim World League:

When women stop bringing up children it means the end of the world. . . .

The recurrent use of the word "empowerment" of women does more harm than benefit [to] the cause of women or their relations. . . . "Empowerment" whether of men or women is necessarily belligerent.

From the International Islamic Council for Daw' a & Relief—Women and Children's Committee, and the International Muslim NGO Caucus:

The role of religion in society has been almost completely ignored in this document at great peril both in terms of our ability to identify the nature and sources of social problems and our capacity to plan for balanced and comprehensive social development.