

European Population Forum 2004: Population Challenges and
Policy Response
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Presentation of Ana Manso
Tuesday, 13 January 2004 – Morning Session

Panel discussion “Childbearing and parenting in low fertility
countries: enabling choices”

Good Morning Ladies and Gentleman and thank you very much,
Mister Chair.

My name is Ana Manso, from the Parliament of Portugal and I'm
Chair of the Portuguese All-party Group on Population and
Development (GPPSPD)

Before I started sharing my experience with all of you, I would like to
congratulate the Organisation of this Forum for putting these
pertinent issues on the Agenda.

As you might know the debate about birth decrease is on the
political Agenda within the areas of health, economy and social
affairs.

What is clear to all of us is that the links between poverty and birth-
rates has to be made as part of human rights.

The families with the largest number of children are those at the
opposite extremes of the wealth pyramid.

The richest families have easier access to health services and
education, because they have more skills and information.

Poverty is responsible for the lack of information health services and social support.

I wish not only to focus on laws and budget, but also about accessibility, the individual rights of women and children.

The Cairo Plan of Action opens windows to these basic rights.

Unfortunately some doors that should have been open remain closed.

The importance of a social and cultural dialogue as mentioned by Mrs. Thoraya Obaid is a reality in Portuguese Society, like she and Mr. Steve Sinding had the opportunity to witness during the I.E.P.F.P.D. council meeting in Lisbon in last year.

The community of migrants is responsible for the swift in paradigm of the contemporary societies.

It is up to us to decide whether we turn this paradigm into a positive and constructive one.

In order to obtain and attain this, we must actively work on the issues of HIV/AIDS, female genital cutting, maternal mortality, intravenous drug abuse, sexual exploration, gender based violence and discrimination.

These are the challenges we have to address as we talk about human rights and birth increase.

Where are the equal opportunities in the areas of policy making and within the different family and social structures??

It is obvious that we would like to have more children, even when the pregnancy was not planned but still wanted.

We all support the idea of happy and healthy women, children and men, couples and families as part of the social and human development.

What we don't want is more pregnancies resulting in the death of the mothers, on social, cultural or economic dysfunctions, caused by discrimination.

Inter generational solidarity can only exist in a climate of respect and love without boundaries.

I believe that new family-dynamics are able to make a change.

I would like to thank you all for the opportunity that I have been given to share my experience and concerns with you, and also for the testimonies from witch personality I have learned a lot.

Finally the choice and accessibility on sexual and reproductive health is a milestone in the individual rights as part of human rights and democracy.

I would like to stress that when helping developing countries on the area of sexual reproductive health we must analyse their current situation in order to address in an accurate way their needs and not by a global approach.

It is my wish, message and challenge I would like to communicate to all of us.

Thank you very much.