



Population Policy and the Environment

Joint International Position Statement

1. The undersigned organisations recognise the following facts:

- A. Global population, increasing by 80 million per year (10,000 per hour), is projected to grow to 9.3 billion (medium UN forecast) by 2050. The additional 2.3 billion, mainly in low-carbon countries, equates to two more 'carbon USAs'. The range of UN projections for 2050, from 8.1 to 10.6 billion, varies by 2.5 billion – ie the total world population in 1950 – depending on fertility rates, which are variable.
- B. Past population growth from one billion in 1800 to seven billion today, together with rising resource consumption per head, has already contributed to: climate change; increased pollution; the '6th extinction' loss of biodiversity; raised sea levels; ocean acidification; and expanding deserts.
- C. This growth has been largely 'funded' by rapidly depleting natural capital (resources such as fossil fuels, minerals, groundwater, soil fertility, forests, fisheries and biodiversity) rather than sustainable natural income. Global food supply is heavily dependent on cheap and abundant oil and water, both of which are rapidly becoming more costly and scarce.
- D. The Earth's capacity to support life is physically finite. Global sustainability requires sustainable economies operating within environmental limits of natural income.
- E. Each additional person increases total human impact on the natural environment and decreases natural resources per head; so that all environmental and resource-scarcity (and thus many economic and social) problems are easier to solve with fewer people, and harder - and ultimately impossible - with more.
- F. Environmental degradation, including climate change and resource depletion, is steadily reducing the number of people and other species the Earth can indefinitely sustain.
- G. Resource-intensive industrialisation, urbanisation and western consumption patterns are exacerbating climate change and further reducing the carrying capacity of the Earth.
- H. The GDP growth rate per head ('development') is the GDP growth rate adjusted down for the population growth rate; and is further hampered in the poorest countries by high birth rates, compounding resource depletion and growing environmental damage.
- I. Indefinite population growth being physically impossible, it must stop at some point: either sooner through fewer births by contraception and humane, pro-active population policy; or later through more deaths by famine, disease, war, or environmental collapse; or some combination of these.
- J. The optimum population (the best quality of life for all) is by definition much smaller than the maximum (bare survival).

Conclusion: Current population growth is both undesirable and unsustainable.

2. We recommend that the United Nations and intergovernmental organisations, governments, and non-governmental environment and development bodies should:

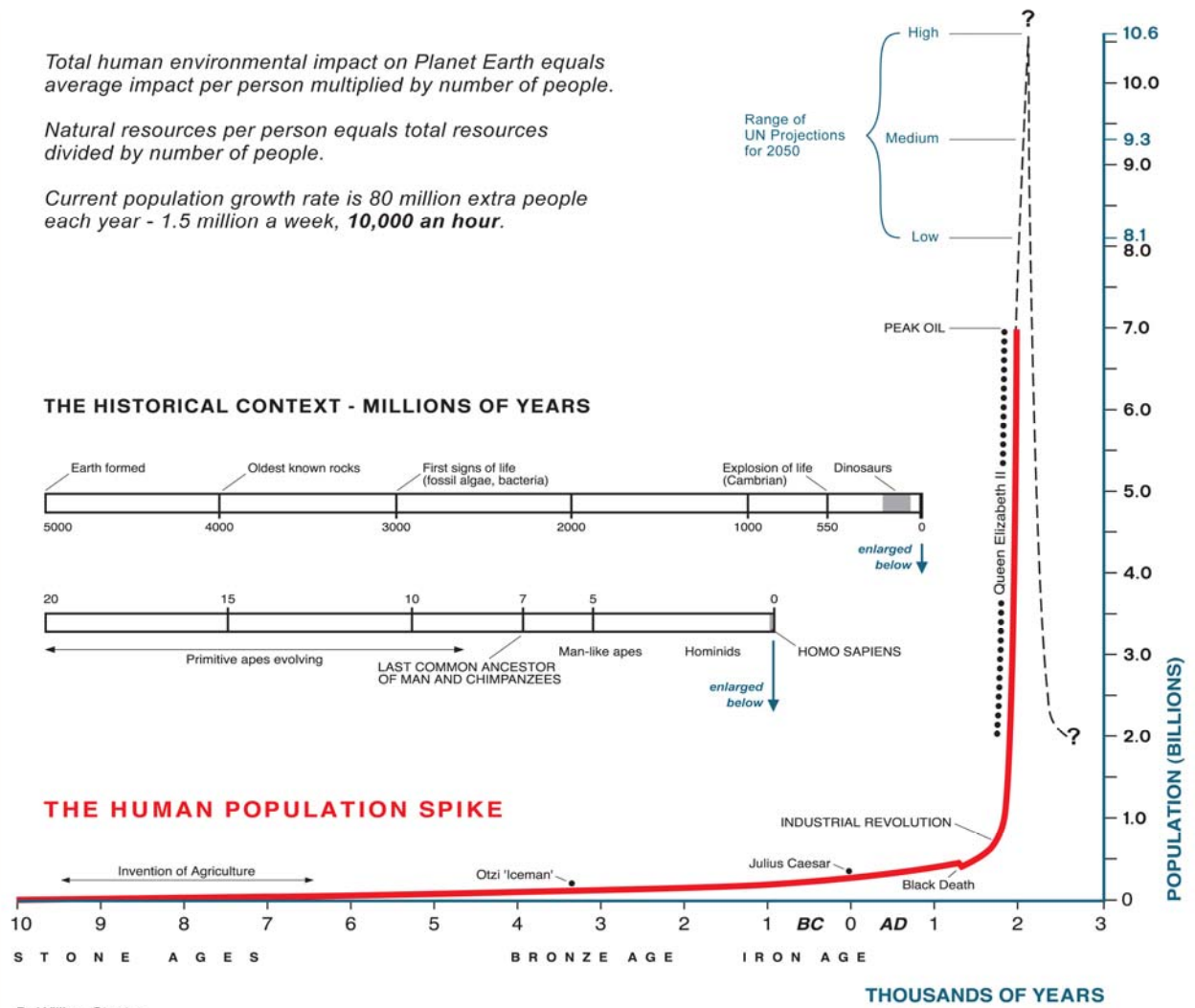
- A. Recognise and acknowledge the factual truth of these statements.
- B. Support, fund or ensure universal access to family planning information and services worldwide, as agreed at the 1994 Cairo Conference and in Millennium Development Goal 5 for 2015.
- C. Support, fund or ensure women's education and empowerment, giving them control of their own fertility.
- D. Adopt non-coercive policies to stabilise or reduce populations at or to sustainable levels, including planning for an ageing population.
- E. Take firm measures, especially in high-consuming regions, to reduce per capita resource depletion and environmental degradation.

WORLD POPULATION : FUTURE UNCERTAIN

Total human environmental impact on Planet Earth equals average impact per person multiplied by number of people.

Natural resources per person equals total resources divided by number of people.

Current population growth rate is 80 million extra people each year - 1.5 million a week, **10,000 an hour**.



Signatory Organisations:

Associazione Radicale Rientrodolce – Italy
 BOCS Foundation – Hungary
 Démographie Responsable – France
 ECOPOP – Switzerland
 Gaia Preservation Coalition – Canada
 Kenya Young Greens
 The Herbert Gruhl Society – Germany
 One Baby - Belgium

Populacao Sustantavel – Brazil
 Population Institute of Canada
 Population Institute – USA
 Population Matters – UK
 Population Matters – Sweden
 Sustainable Population Australia
 The Ten Million Club – Holland

Please contact Population Matters UK if your organisation is interested in signing up to this position statement.

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