

IIASA: Laxenburg Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development

An international panel consisting of over 20 population and development experts convened at the [International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis](#) (IIASA) in Vienna, from 30 September to 1 October 2011, to discuss how population factors promote or impede sustainable development.

Amidst concerns about the earth's capacity to support a burgeoning world population of over 7 billion, experts argue that it is not the number of people that matters, but more so their age, education, health status, and geographic location that is most relevant to issues of sustainability.

According to the Panel, sustainable development initiatives must focus on investments in human capital, and recognise the differential impacts that people make on the environment based on their socioeconomic differences and vulnerabilities. In poor countries especially, these vulnerabilities are closely associated with categories of age, gender, education, place of residence, and standard of living.

The [Laxenburg Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development](#), as prepared by the Expert Panel, describes the following five actions as necessary to achieving sustainable development:

1. Recognise that the numbers, characteristics, and behaviours of people are at the heart of sustainable development challenges and of their solutions.
2. Identify subpopulations that contribute most to environmental degradation and those that are most vulnerable to its consequences.
3. Devise sustainable development policies to treat these subpopulations differently and appropriately, according to their demographic and behavioural characteristics.
4. Facilitate the inevitable trend of increasing urbanisation in ways that ensure that environmental hazards and vulnerabilities are under control.
5. Invest in human capital—people's education and health, including reproductive health—to slow population growth, accelerate the transition to green technologies, and improve people's adaptive capacity to environmental change.

These action points were formulated as input to Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in June 2012. To join the list of signatories, please sign the feedback form [here](#).