

# Population policy and the environment

## joint international position statement

### 1. The undersigned organisations recognise the following facts:

- A.** Past population growth from one billion in 1800 to 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.8 billion today, together with rising resource consumption per head, has already: caused climate change, increasing pollution, rising sea levels and expanding deserts; and has been largely “funded” by rapidly depleting natural capital (finite resources such as fossil fuels, groundwater, minerals, soil fertility, forests, fisheries and biodiversity) rather than sustainable natural income.
- B.** The capacity of the Earth is finite, reducing with climate change, and cannot sustain indefinite growth in human numbers and resource exploitation.
- C.** Global population, increasing by 80 million per year (10,000 per hour) is projected to grow to 9.1 billion by 2050. The additional 2.3 billion, even in low-carbon countries, equates to two more “carbon USAs”.
- D.** 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, and environmental collapse; or some combination of these.
- E.** Each additional person increases total human impact on the natural environment and decreases natural resources per head; so that all environmental (and many economic and social) problems are easier to solve with fewer people, and harder (and ultimately impossible) with more.
- F.** Environmental degradation and resource depletion is steadily reducing the number of people the Earth can indefinitely sustain.
- G.** Spreading industrialisation, urbanisation and first world consumption patterns are further reducing the ultimate carrying capacity of the Earth.
- H.** Global food supply is heavily dependent on cheap and abundant oil and water, both of which are rapidly becoming more scarce and costly.
- I.** Development (GDP growth per person) of the poorest countries continues to be hampered by high birth rates (ever more people).
- J.** The optimum population (best quality of life for all) is clearly much smaller than the maximum (bare survival).

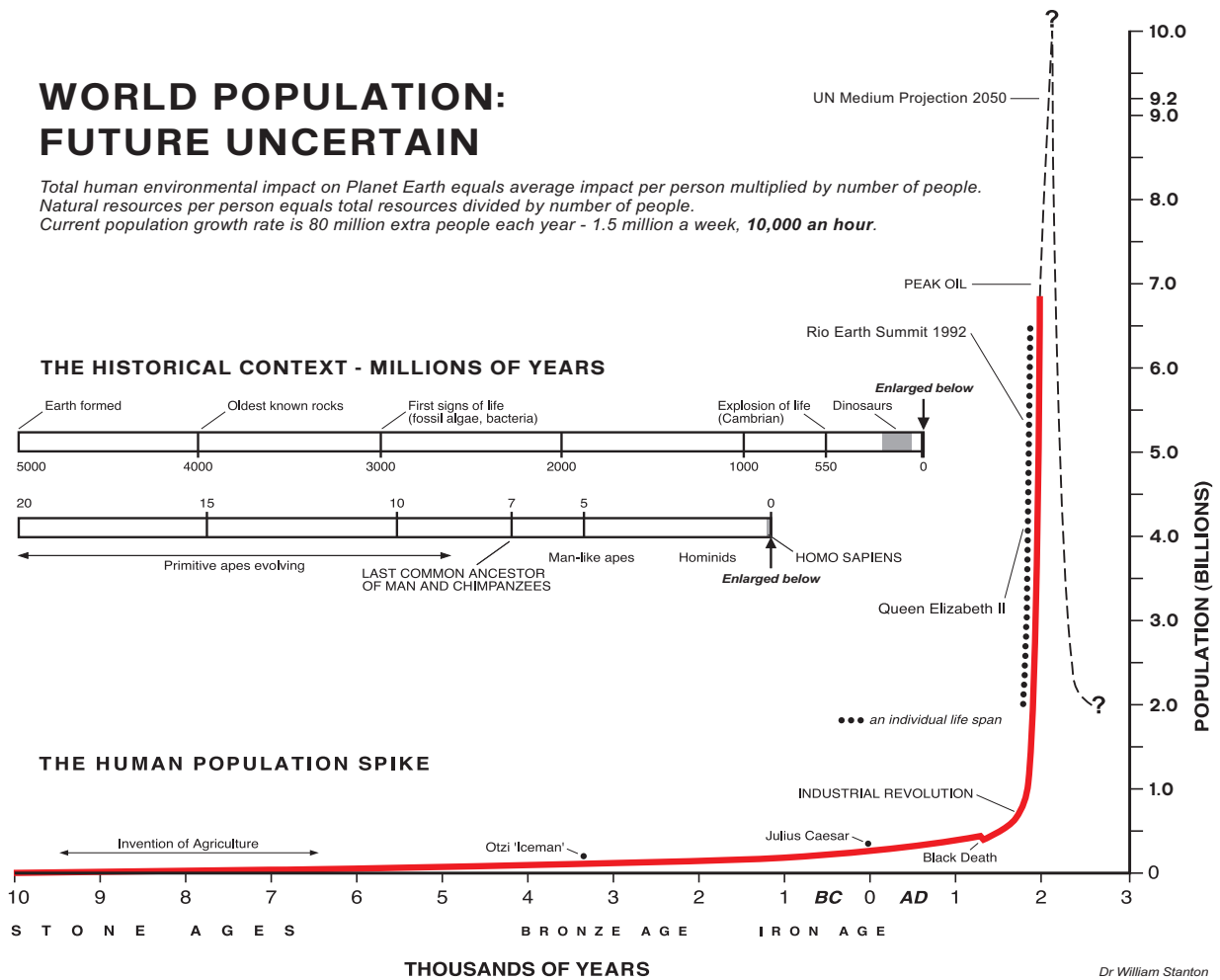
### **conclusion:** Current population growth is environmentally unsustainable.

### 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 worldwide, as agreed at the 1994 Cairo Conference and in Millennium Development Goal 5 for 2012.
- C.** Support, fund or ensure the education and empowerment of women, enabling them to control 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 promote the reduction of 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 |  Population Institute - USA          |
|  Démographie Responsable - France           |  Population Media Center - USA       |
|  NOPEC - Nigeria                            |  Sustainable Population Australia    |
|  NUPEO - Norway                             |  The Herbert Gruhl Society - Germany |
|  Optimum Population Trust - UK              |  The Ten Million Club - Holland      |
|  Population Institute of Canada             |   |

Please contact OPT if your organisation is interested in signing up to this position statement.

Optimum Population Trust  
www.optimumpopulation.org  
info@optimumpopulation.org  
Telephone +44 (0)208 123 9116

