

THIRTY-EIGHTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

WHA38.22

Agenda item 22.2

17 May 1985

MATURITY BEFORE CHILDBEARING AND PROMOTION  
OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

The Thirty-eighth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions WHA31.55 and WHA32.42 on the long-term programme on maternal and child health;

Recognizing the disastrous world-wide health, educational, economic and social consequences of premature pregnancy in adolescent women, and in particular the high risks of maternal morbidity and mortality, as well as low birth-weight, with consequent infant mortality and physical or mental handicap which may persist throughout life;

Recognizing that these effects are compounded where poverty, illiteracy, adverse environmental conditions or undernutrition prevail, and where for many reasons prenatal care is not available or sought;

Aware that a large and increasing proportion of the populations of many Member States is adolescent and that, pending the provision of adequate health services for all, trained health workers and resources are limited, especially in rural areas;

1. URGES all Member States to act immediately:

- (1) to promote healthy families through the provision of adequate information and guidance for responsible parenthood to adolescents;
- (2) to promote the delay of childbearing until both prospective parents, but especially the mother, have reached maturity in adulthood;
- (3) to ensure that their populations are aware of the need for both prospective parents to be fully grown, adequately nourished, and disease-free before conception;
- (4) to ensure that health, education and social service providers are enabled to provide sound, culturally acceptable information and guidance; and

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to encourage collaborative action-oriented research on both biomedical and culturally relevant social factors contributing to the prevention of pregnancy before the couple are biologically and socially mature, and on the adverse consequences of pregnancy and childbearing in adolescence;
- (2) to increase the Organization's collaboration with Member States and their relevant governmental and nongovernmental agencies in providing primary health care with the emphasis on promotive and preventive programmes for adolescents including family life education, antenatal, delivery and postnatal care, and supporting family services as an urgent step in the implementation of the 1978 Declaration of Alma-Ata.

Fifteenth plenary meeting, 17 May 1985  
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