Kenyans misinformed on debate

I wish to refer to the letters entitled "Vital

meeting denied publicity" *(Nation,* July 11)

by Miriam Mutebi and Laila Malik and a

rejoinder entitled "Population conference

profane" *(Nation,* July 29) by Cleophas

Wanyonyi.

I concur that this vitally important international

conference has not been given the publicity

it deserves in the Kenyan media. Likewise,

the population and development debates.

that have been raging elsewhere in the world

are almost unheard of on the Kenyan scene.

Little wonder the public seems to be ill informed

about the conference.

For a start, I do hope that the three writers

are familiar' with the Draft Programme of

Action for the Cairo Conference.

The ·conference is not an isolated event but

a logical follow-up to the 1974 World Population

Conference and the 1984 International

Conference on Population in Mexico City.

The overall theme of the conference is population,

sustained economic growth and sustainable

development.

The original UN Draft Document has been

reviewed over and over again by as many

government delegations and other non-governmental

and women-related NGOs as

possible.

I wish to draw to the attention of Mutebi,

Malik and Wanyonyi to the Draft Final Document

of the conference. The Draft

.Programme of Action is an important document worthy of serious thought and reflection.

It builds upon the considerable international

consensus which has developed since

1984.

Additionally, the 1994 conference was explicitly

given a broader mandate than the earlier

population conferences, reflecting the

growing global awareness that population

change, poverty, inequality in resources allocation,

patterns of consumption and threats

to the environment are closely

interconnected.

The conference calls for far greater investment

in people as the most imp6rtant factor

for bringing about sustainable development

and for a new action agenda to make women

full partners with men in the social, economic

and political lives of their communities:

To this effect women and women-related

. non-governmental organisations the world

over have added their voices to the population

and development debates and most of the

concerns and perspectives have been incorporated

in the document.

Admittedly, controversial issues such as

sexual and reproductive healths, family planning,

adolescent health, condom distributional

use, safe motherhood, safe abortion, safe sex,

sexual orientation and marital status, sexual

education and reproductive health services

and contraception, etc., for which consensus

were not achieved are still bracketed.

I must, however, point out that the revised

Programme of Action to be released at the Cairo conference makes no direct mention of

the following issues:

Reduction of the population level of

Third World..

Coercive family planning policies by

government.

Removal of all barriers to abortion.

Alienation of men/fathers or male responsibility

and participation.

Promoting abortion as a means of family

planning.

Direct reference to lesbians and

homosexuals.

Advocating artificial fertilisation for

those who are sterile and lesbians.

Advocating the use of contraceptives *I*

condoms from age of 10 years, etc.

The conference document does not set itself

to prescribe promiscuity judging by its

STDs and HIV*/*Aids control and prevention.

One of its objectives is to "address adolescent

reproductive health issues, including unplanned

pregnancy, unsafe abortion, HIV infections

and Aids and other sexually

transmitted diseases, through the promotion

of healthy reproductive and sexual behaviour

and to substantially reduce adolescent pregnancies

within as well as outside marriage."

In no way does the conference promote antisocial

behaviour by children and youth, as

Wanyonyi claims.

Dr Catherine A. Lalobo-Lore,

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