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experiences of developed countries which have already seen the average age of their population rise significantly."

Policymakers in developed regions are increasingly concerned about the financial and health needs of older populations, the SWP report said.

"Attention is turning to retirement arrangements for older people [including the possibility of continuing work], reform of pension systems, review of health care and long-term care programmes and building community support systems for older persons," it said.

At the same time, it is projected that the ageing of the population will happen more slowly in countries where fertility and mortality rates are still high.

Source: *Today*, 15 October 2000, Philippines

## October 18 is World Menopause Day

On October 18 women celebrated the first World Menopause Day, as declared by the International Menopause Society. On this day, nations were reminded to take active steps in educating women about the health-related implications of menopause.

Menopause, which signals the end of a woman's fertility, occurs on the average at age 51. During this period, women's bodies stop producing estrogen, which causes symptoms such as hot flashes, fatigue, vaginal dryness, and sleeplessness. Estrogen loss also has been associated with a number of serious disorders, including osteoporosis, heart disease, macular degeneration (blindness), tooth loss, colon cancer, and cognitive decline. Menopausal women are therefore advised to seek medical advice.

The World Health Organisation estimates that by the year 2030, 1.2 billion women will be 50 years of age and above. Of this figure, many are expected to live for several decades after menopause.

Condensed from: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 18 October 2000; <<http://www.individual.com>> and BusinessWire. For more information on menopause, visit Websites <<http://www.menopause.org>> and <<http://www.menopause-online.com>>.

## Technology Causing Drop in Proportion of Females

The emergence of reproductive technology in India has contributed to the country's declining proportion of females, according to a study by the Haryana state literacy resource centre (*Times of India*, 6 November).

India recently made it illegal for doctors to reveal the sex of an unborn child, a process that had enabled parents to selectively abort girl foetuses; nonetheless, the practice persists. An estimated two million foetuses are aborted annually in India, *foreigntv.com* reported.

The Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes and the Mahila Sarvangeen Utkash Mandal

recently pointed to "the gross misuse of reproductive technology in a society characterised by a strong bias against the female child." Reproductive technology has widened the sex-ratio gap, they said.

While female infanticide has historically been the main contributor to declining sex ratios, "female foeticide" has become a factor as well, according to Venkatesh Athreya, head of the Bharathidasan University economics department in Tamil Nadu. The practice is of very recent origin, he says, since the technology for identifying the sex of the foetus has come into use in India only recently.

The lowest sex ratio in the country is in Haryana, where there are 875 females per 1,000 males, the *Times of India* reports. In neighboring Punjab, the ratio is closer to 882.

Other factors, including the neglect of baby girls and better health care for males, have resulted in the decline in sex ratios. "Discrimination against the girl child has been seen more in the intermediate [classes], especially in communities which have resources in the form of land and money, than in the poor and lower-caste families," says Dr. Ami Sengupta of the Delhi Science Forum (*Times of India*).

Source: UNwire, 9 November 2000