

As written



304 East 45th Street . New York, N.Y. 10017 . Tel: 212-906-6400. Fax: 212-906-6705

Dr. Nafis Sadik,
Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen ,
on behalf of the Executive Director, Noeleen Heyzer, who much to
her regret cannot be present today, it is an honour to represent the
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) at this
important Forum to review the progress in implementing the
Programme of Action of the International Conference on
Population and Development.

As we are meeting today, to review the progress made, which has
been considerable, and the challenges that lie ahead in attaining the
goals set out in the Programme of Action, we should not lose sight
of the fact that Cairo was a landmark in the series of global
conferences that, in the course of this decade, brought together
political leaders and decision-makers, representatives of civil
society and NGOs and United Nations agencies to chart the way

into the next millennium, a millennium we hope which will see the goals of these Conferences fully attained.

The global conferences of the nineties and Cairo among them, do indeed represent a continuum in which the consensus of one fed into the dialogue and decision making of the following one, and where the recognition of the interconnection between issues of population and environment, of social development and respect for human rights led to the formulation of goals which were mutually supportive and only attainable through the synergies of concerted action.

The goals of gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women, as well as of the elimination of all forms of violence against women, which the Programme of Action so clearly defined, became a benchmark for the Fourth World Conference on Women and are reflected, or more precisely, restated, in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Common goals call for common action. And common action becomes possible when true partnerships are built. The message of Cairo, of Beijing and of the other conferences has also been to work together across national, institutional or organizational

differentiations, in the respect of individual mandates and in the interest of more efficient targeting and impact.

As we review here the progress since ICPD, and as we shall review next year the progress since Beijing, the one question we shall have to answer is: what difference has there been in the lives of individual women and men; have their needs been met, their rights respected, their hopes fulfilled? They are the reality against which the success of our actions can be measured.

This is why, when setting out to turn words spoken in Cairo, and in Beijing, into reality, UNIFEM and UNFPA decided to strengthen their partnership and to build on the synergies between the two funds.

A first instance was in the context of Global Conferences follow-up. When the Secretary-General asked Dr. Sadik to chair the Task Force on Basic Needs and Services, Dr. Sadik established a Working Group on Empowerment and called upon the Executive Director of UNIFEM to chair it. The Group produced guidelines on how to apply an empowerment framework to programming, which were later circulated to UN Resident Coordinators and to UNFPA Country Support Teams.

Another area in which this partnership was realized has been through UNIFEM's technical backstopping in gender, population and development of UNFPA's Country Support Teams. Ten GPD advisers have been placed in these teams. The financial support of UNFPA which UNIFEM gratefully acknowledges, coupled with the expertise provided by UNIFEM, through these Advisors, helped in reflecting a gender perspective in population programmes undertaken by UNFPA in cooperation with member countries. By working in synergy with other members of the Country Support Teams, the Gender and Population Advisers are promoting gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women; they are helping in mainstreaming gender considerations in reproductive health programmes, and censuses and statistics. They emphasize the need for female education and the protection of the rights of the girl child, the reduction of maternal as well as infant and child mortality and the right of women to control their own fertility.

The partnership has been so fruitful, that it has served as example for others. UNV – UNDP – UNIFEM Gender Specialists and UNIFEM Gender Advisers are placed in selected country offices to assist Resident Coordinators and country teams to mainstream

gender in operational activities of the UN. A similar partnership has been established with UNAIDS. Together, these initiatives contribute to making available to programme countries a network of gender expertise to assist in the follow-up implementation of Cairo and Beijing. In the true spirit of UN reform, they provide coordinated support and cost-effective access to specific expertise.

Rallying around another common issue, UNFPA, UNIFEM and other UN Agencies have participated in a regional campaign in Latin America to eliminate violence against women, later extended to Africa and Asia and the Pacific and now global in outreach and impact. This campaign shall culminate on 8 March in a United Nations Inter-agency global video conference: “A World Free of Violence Against Women”. The Video-conference shall link the UN General Assembly in New York with four other sites in the other regions bringing together advocates and policy makers engaged in innovative initiatives to eradicate gender based violence. This undertaking is the result of the close cooperation of different UN entities to celebrate the last International Women’s Day of the millennium by celebrating the progress achieved and the successful strategies adopted to eliminate violence against women.

Protecting women against all forms of violence, including violence due to cultural traditional practices or the violence to which they are exposed in conflict situations is a necessary premise for women to exercise their rights, including reproductive rights, and for overcoming discrimination.

In this respect, the role of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which is also referred to in paragraphs 108 and 109 of the background document prepared by UNFPA for the present Forum, becomes particularly important as an instrument through which member countries can progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action. Much progress has been registered in the number of countries ratifying CEDAW. Here too, the value lies not in the document being signed, but in the application of its covenants. Taking CEDAW as a benchmark, progress towards meeting equality and equity targets can be measured. CEDAW moreover, while representing a global consensus, can promote the realization of common targets for women's empowerment at the national and even local level. The UNIFEM publication "Bringing Equality Home", which is being made available to delegates, provides concrete examples of how a global consensus can be translated into local action for change.

In closing, I wish this Forum all success in reconfirming our common and unfailing commitment to the promotion of gender equality, the elimination of all forms of violence and the protection of the equal rights of women and men, of girls and boys and, taking pride in the attainments so far, engage with renewed energy in the realization of a better world for women and men of present and future generations.

Thank you.