



As WRITTEN

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**STATEMENT**

by

**H.E.MR.MOVSES ABELIAN**

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ON THE TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
DEVOTED TO THE OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

**NEW YORK**  
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**Check against delivery**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia, allow me to begin by expressing our appreciation for the important work done by the Commission on Population and Development acting as the Preparatory Committee for this Special Session under the very able chairmanship of Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury.

The five-year review of activities after the **ICPD** shows that the implementation of the recommendations of the Programme of Action has shown positive results. Many countries have taken steps to integrate population concerns into their development strategies. The Republic of Armenia has also clearly expressed its commitment to the principles, objectives and recommendations of the **ICPD** Programme of Action and taken relevant steps towards integrating population concerns into its development strategy.

Following the ICPD, the Parliament of Armenia adopted "The Law on Medical Care and Services", which contains special provisions on reproductive rights, including rights of adolescents and young people. In 1994, the Ministry of Health elaborated a policy document approved as "Strategic Plan of Action of the National Programme on Reproductive Health." The purpose of the reproductive health programmes is to improve the access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health care services, including access to safe abortion. Since 1996, this programme has been receiving technical and financial support of the UNFPA and WHO. Some other UN agencies, including UNICEF, UNHCR, as well as international and local NGOs, continue to support the said Programme.

In 1997, following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a State Commission on the Development of Gender Policy was established by the decision of the Prime Minister of Armenia. The Commission holds its meetings jointly with **NGOs** dealing with gender issues and acts as an advisory body to the Government.

In April 1998, the Government adopted "The National Platform of Action for the improvement of the situation of women and promotion of their role in the society for

1998-2000.” The Platform was prepared by the Ministry of Social Security in close collaboration with respective Ministries and local NGOs. It is a major government policy paper, which provides mechanisms for the implementation of the constitutional provisions on equal rights and opportunities for men and women, the CEDAW, as well as recommendations of the Programme of Action of the Beijing Conference.

We can state now that since Cairo a considerable experience has been gained in Armenia, both on the Governmental and non-Governmental levels on addressing population and development concerns, and in some of the fields we have already seen progress. In particular, considerable decline of maternal and infant mortality has been observed during the last five years.

Mr. President,

Despite the success of the past years, a number of obstacles, mainly limited financial resources, impede initiation of new programmes or increasing effectiveness of the existing ones. The unemployment and poverty levels remain very high, and, regrettably, the Government often lacks the financial ability to implement a net of social guarantees stipulated by the Constitution.

The situation with abortion continues to cause concern. Although abortion is legal in Armenia, many women still rely on self-induced abortions due to the financial restrictions, and sometimes these abortions result in serious complications and consequences. As inertia of the past, many couples still regard abortion as the main method of family planning.

Since the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1988, Armenia has been facing the problem of integration of hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan. The devastating earthquake of December 1988 further aggravated the situation, causing internal migration of about 400,000 people. The population of the earthquake zone remains in a grave situation and continues to be of major concern for the Armenian Government. Here too we enjoyed assistance of international organisations, namely the UNHCR, but we are still too far from the final solution.

And finally I have to stress the problem of emigration from Armenia, mainly to Russia

and other CIS countries, caused by unfavourable economic environment. The estimated official figures of those who left the country is about 700,000 and since these are mostly young men, it leaves its negative impact also on the marriage rate and indicators of the sexual and reproductive health. The population growth rate has decreased due to decline of the birth rate, high mortality and emigration rates. These factors badly affect the age structure of the population and the demographic situation as a whole.

Mr. President,

The ICPD gave impetus to the development of the NGO sector in Armenia. I am pleased to state that the number and the activities of NGOs have grown significantly during the last five years. There are now about 2,000 officially registered organisations, including about 50 women's NGOs. Some capital-based NGOs are establishing branches in the provinces thus creating networks all over Armenia. On the other hand there is a tendency among some NGOs to unite in associations for better cooperation towards the implementation of common goals. Another tendency is to switch from humanitarian assistance to population development programmes. Several NGOs have become increasingly important to the implementation of population-related programmes, since they use new approaches and innovative strategies. They actively collaborate with the Government making important contributions to population and development related policies and programmes. A good example of a NGO contribution is the 1996 pilot project on Sex Education of Children introduced by Family Planning Association of Armenia "For Family and Health" and the "Sexual Health Educational and Counselling Center for Adolescents" established by the same Association in Yerevan in 1998, which is the only in its kind in the Southern Caucasus.

Mr. President,

My Government re-affirms its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action, and continues to take concrete steps for mobilising human and financial resources in order to fully implement its ideas and goals. As an integral part of the Southern Caucasus region, we believe that regional co-operation and participation in many regional initiatives will ensure the region's stability.

Thank you.