

The Permanent Mission of Egypt  
to the United Nations  
New York

Speech by Mr. Samih Shukri,

Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt,  
before the special session to discuss implementation of  
the Programme of Action of the International  
Conference on Population and Development Beyond

2014, to be convened on

22 September, 2014

(13:00-21:00)

at the United Nations Headquarters in New York,

The General Assembly

It is requested that the text above be referred to during the speech's delivery.

Mr. President,

Esteemed heads of state and delegations,

Ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, allow me to extend special thanks to the Chairman of the General Assembly, on the occasion of its 69<sup>th</sup> Session, for convening this special session to follow up on the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action agreed in Cairo in 1994. This conference constituted a milestone in the history of international cooperation by devoting individual attention to a broader range of development themes than previous conferences in this area, a fact which reflects the international community's growing awareness of the interrelated nature of population-related issues, poverty, education, and the environment, and its realization that it is impossible to address any of these issues in isolation from the others.

For this reason, the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development may be viewed as a turning point in the treatment of development and population-related issues and the link between population and development. The Cairo conference formulated a practical conceptualization of the international community's approach to dealing with population issues. This conceptualization took the form of a shift from a quantitative emphasis on population statistics to a qualitative emphasis on individuals' needs, aspirations and rights. The Cairo 1994 Programme of Action helped lay the foundations for formulation of the Millennium Development Goals and, over the past two decades, has led to constructive efforts toward lowering poverty rates and promoting education and gender equality.

The document issued by the 1994 Cairo conference may be viewed as a real accomplishment, being a balanced and comprehensive document which has continued to this day to be a shared point of reference for how to address development and population-related issues on the international level. Moreover, extension of the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action beyond 2014 is clear evidence of this shared vision.

Ladies and gentlemen:

On the national level, with its population of more than 86 million, Egypt is one of the most populated Arab countries, and among the African countries with the highest population density. Consequently, Egypt views the issue of population as being of paramount importance. Article 41 of Egypt's new constitution affirms the population issue as the cornerstone of national plans for sustainable development. This commitment is being translated into concrete realities through the ambitious development plan known as "Egypt 2030", which includes a population and development strategy whose various focal points reflect relevant national priorities, including girls' education as a means of reducing early marriage, women's empowerment, family planning, and reproductive health. These priorities are being pursued through a focus on youth, who make up approximately two-thirds of Egypt's population and who, for this reason, have the potential to become the means of

achieving the benefits of population growth, and the leading force behind development in all areas.

On the international level, Egypt affirms its commitment to a periodic review of the International Conference on Population and Development, and to formulation of the best possible methods for carrying out what remains of the Programme of Action. We intend to carry on with our efforts to marshal the support necessary for the conference in various international forums, and to make population issues a top priority on international development agendas.

In this context, Egypt hosted the Arab Regional Review Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in June, 2013 with the aim of assessing the progress that had been achieved toward implementing the Programme of Action. The "Cairo Declaration of 2013" was adopted unanimously, which in turn made it possible to establish a united Arab position on the International Conference on Population and Development in the post-2014 phase. Egypt likewise played an effective role in the African Review Conference on Population and Development held in Addis Ababa in September, 2013.

The process of implementation follow-up cannot be discussed in isolation from the matter of funding. For this reason, we look to our partners in development to work together to provide both basic and additional funding sources for developing countries through bilateral and multilateral funding mechanisms, as well as through the private sector, with the aim of strengthening relevant institutions' ability to implement the Cairo Programme of Action. In this context, I would like to make reference to the Second Development Funding Conference, which developing countries view as particularly important, and whose goals we are counting on our partners from among the developed countries to assist us in achieving.

In keeping with what is stipulated by the Programme of Action, Egypt stresses each state's sovereign right to implement the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development in a manner consistent with its particular national laws and development goals, with full respect for its people's religious values and cultural background, and in compliance with internationally agreed-upon human rights-related charters and conventions.

Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed major changes which have given rise to new development challenges that require the international community to work toward creating sustainable consumption and production patterns. We hereby affirm the value of this great effort. At the same time, we affirm the right of developing nations to pursue development as a fundamental, inalienable, internationally recognized human right, a right which can only be exercised given the provision of the tools and sources of funding needed to achieve the development sought.

Mr. President:

In conclusion, as we gather here today to envision ways of implementing the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, we are proud of what has been achieved thus far. However, we must realize together that in order to

move forward in this current phase based on what was achieved in Cairo, we will need to adopt a multicultural approach capable of accommodating all differences that might arise among members. Only in this way will we be able to coordinate the efforts and aspirations of all and confront our shared challenges with hope for a better future. Toward this end, I am counting on everyone's cooperation.

Thank you.