

Statement by Dr Nafis Sadik,
Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund
to the Committee of the Whole
at the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly for the
Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of
the Programme of Action of the International
Conference on Population and Development, 1994

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ICPD+5: Process and Progress

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Introduction

This Special Session represents a success of two kinds: first, it is a success for the United Nations process of building global consensus through open and inclusive discussion; and secondly, it marks five successful years of progress in implementing the consensus on population, as a development issue concerning all nations.

The ICPD consensus is strong because it is firmly based on universal principles: the sovereignty of nations; human rights and ethical values. Its implementation empowers the individual; nurtures the family and strengthens the nation. It demonstrates the effectiveness of international partnership and co-operation.

Process

Excellencies

Preparations for this Special Session have been thorough. They included surveys by the United Nations Population Division and UNFPA; a series of round tables and technical meetings; a global discussion on experience in the International Forum at The Hague; regional meetings, and exhaustive discussions in the Preparatory Committee.

The resulting proposals for key future actions are concise and concrete. They are a vindication of the United Nations process of inclusive discussion, reflecting the views of all nations. They show that consensus can be reached at the highest level of thought and action.

I would like to offer my thanks to all concerned in the preparatory process, to the members of the bureau, and especially to the chairman, whose monumental patience and dogged determination played an important part in bringing the discussions to this point; a man who has served both his country and the United Nations with great distinction, Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury.

I would also like to offer my thanks to Joe Chamie and his colleagues at the Population Division, whose hard work and dedication have supported and facilitated the process.

Progress

Excellencies

As I remarked in closing the ICPD, the Programme of Action is a very ambitious and forward-looking document. Your commitment to implementation over the last five years shows that this ambitious reach is justified.

Countries in all settings have put new population policies in place, and existing policies have been revised in the light of ICPD. There is a renewed movement to integrate population into broader development policies. New thinking on population has stimulated action in related policy areas, such as economic policy, and environment and natural resources.

ICPD stimulated action to promote gender equity and equality, including new legal protections and the enforcement of existing laws and constitutional guarantees. Gender-based violence and sexual abuse are increasingly the subject of discussion and action. Many affected countries have taken action against female genital mutilation.

The aim of the last five years has been to integrate family planning programmes into broad and inclusive reproductive health services, while ensuring that neglected areas such as safe motherhood are given the appropriate attention. This movement towards integrated reproductive health will help all areas of health care reform.

A wider range of family planning information and services is available in many countries, reaching more people and meeting a broader spectrum of needs. I said at the closing of the ICPD that this would reduce abortion because it would reduce the need for abortion, and it has proved to be so. Many countries have taken action to address unsafe abortion as a serious public health problem.

Countries have addressed difficult and sensitive subjects on the basis of what was agreed at ICPD. As a result the issues are better understood, opening the way for appropriate action.

To mobilize the united efforts of all elements of society, strong advocacy on the part of political and parliamentary leaders is required. At ICPD, governments agreed to draw into partnership elements of civil society including non-governmental organisations, religious groups, educators and the private sector. Many of your countries have acted on these understandings, and many more have plans to do so.

Key Future Actions

Excellencies,

I need hardly remind you that world population will reach six billion people this year.

The biggest-ever generation of young people are entering their reproductive years. Their decisions on fertility and family size will determine the course of population growth in the next century.

As the Secretary-general pointed out this morning, though population growth rates are down, annual additions are still 78 million a year. It is imperative that we look for population stability. The proposed key future actions have this global imperative very much in mind.

The key future actions respond equally to personal aspirations. As the Secretary-general reminded us, many women, and many men too, **cannot** yet exercise the full range of their human rights, including the right to reproductive health. One of the achievements of ICPD was to recognize gender equity and equality as an aim of population policy, as well as a key to its success. The key future actions build on this recognition.

And the key future actions respond to national development needs. Experience shows that successful social development supports and energizes economic development.

There is no conflict among global imperatives, personal aspirations and national aims: the actions proposed for your consideration here support and reinforce each other. Their successful implementation will carry us far along the road both to sustainability and to the sustained economic growth that all our countries desire.

The **PrepComm** has recommended action in key areas, including reproductive and sexual health; maternal mortality; attention to reproductive health needs of adolescents; prevention of HIV/AIDS; gender issues and education. It has recommended setting new benchmarks in several of these areas, and urged strong action to meet ICPD goals in others.

Excellencies

None of the recommendations you make here can be put into practice without the necessary resources. Alone among the international conference of the **1990s**, ICPD attached costs to its recommendations, and included funding as part of the consensus.

The developing countries are about two-thirds of the way to the agreed total.. The donor countries however have reached only one-third of their goal, or \$2 billion.

This shortfall is a threat not merely to the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, but to global stability and security in the broadest sense. Meeting the ICPD goals, including the transfer of resources, is in the interest of all countries: I hope that all countries, whatever their economic situation, will assign the highest priority to meeting the ICPD goals, and assign the necessary resources to do so.

Conclusion

Excellencies

The proposed key future actions before you are not complete in themselves. They imply further action in other areas of development. However, countries should not and cannot wait for action in other areas: the key future actions are aims in themselves and should be pursued for their own sake.

The key future actions are the result of exhaustive and inclusive discussion over a considerable period of time. They are based on universal principles and on experience in all your countries. They offer a secure basis for decisive and forward-looking conclusions on the best ways of carrying forward the historic consensus of ICPD. Further work is needed on some aspects; but we have faith in the process, and we may be certain that open and inclusive discussion will allow consensus to emerge.

May I, personally and on behalf of UNFPA, offer my pledge that we will do all in our power to help you put into action the decisions you take here. I wish your discussions great success.