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Address

by the

German Minister of the Interior

Manfred KANTHER

on behalf of the

European Union

on the occasion

of the

International Conference on Population and Development 1994

of the United Nations

in Cairo, 5-13 September 1994

Addressed by the Federal Minister of the Interior Manfred Kanther
in Cairo-
On behalf of the European Union

Mr. Chairman. Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen.

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union. Permit me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of your Bureau on your election.

1. We welcome the fact that this decisive international UN conference on population and development takes place on the African continent, a continent which is faced with serious population and developmental problems as well as wide-spread poverty. Cairo is the metropolis of a country where important efforts have been made to deal with these problems and to meet the needs of its people. Successes have been achieved, which were duly recognized by this year's United Nations Population Award received by His Excellency President Mubarak, our host

The broader mandate of the 3rd International Conference of the United Nations on Population and Development should help to increase further the level of awareness of these crucial problems and contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life and to meet the needs of people particularly in the field of population and development.

There is good reason to link the issue of population with

questions of sustained economic growth and sustainable development even more clearly than the conferences of Bucharest in 1974 and Mexico City in 1984. The UN Conference on Environment and Development has shaped this global view of the complex interaction between population development and environment.

In this context, factors such as poverty eradication, the promotion of respect for human right and democratic values, the promotion of gender equity with particular emphasis on the empowerment of women, sustainable consumption and production patterns and protection of the environment are key elements for the achievement of a balanced population growth. These aspects are also relevant for the UN Conferences in 1995 namely the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the 4th World Conference of Women in Beijing

It will be the task of this Conference to find ways how a balance between the population growth and development can be brought about, how the disparities between demographic developments as the result of decisions of individuals, on the one hand, and social, economic and ecological objectives, on the other, can be removed. Such a balance can only be established when population policies are an integral part of sustainable development strategies.

The European Union is committed to further and more intensive cooperation in matters of population and development with a new emphasis on population policies, including an new and integrated approach on sexual and reproductive health and family planning We see a close connection between these two aspects. We are confident that we will be able to successfully work together to ensure that the cooperation built in these areas will be founded on an even more solid basis. Cooperation between developing and developed countries will be facilitated by a

clear determination on both sides to make the necessary efforts We have been encouraged by the results of the preparatory process: if the strong political commitment that was characteristic of the Regional Conferences prevails, this Conference will deepen partnership and lead to success.

In this context the European Union is also encouraged by the strong consensus that has emerged on the need to mobilize significant additional financial resources from both the international community and within developing countries and countries with economies in transition for national population programmes in support of sustainable development. The EU clearly affirms its readiness to increase substantially its financial commitments for cooperation activities in the field of population. We are very confident that the cooperation of the EU with the developing countries and countries in transition will be further strengthened by the accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The EU further wishes to indicate that developing countries, tool are expected to undertake appropriate commitments to increase domestic expenditure on population policies and programmes and that the Conference should focus on ways to improve the quality and coordination of domestic and international support for population policies.

2. We hope and trust that the Final Document of this Conference will be adopted with a broad-based consensus and that it provides operational and useful recommendations for cooperation In the field of development and population policies. In this context the EU would like to express its appreciation to Dr Sadik for her contribution to the draft final document.

The United Nations have proclaimed 1994 the Year of the Family. Families, whatever their structure, determine the population development

in a decisive way. In all cultures, families in their various forms make an irreplaceable contribution to society by bringing up children and taking care of family members in need of help. The State and the society therefore have to shape all the necessary conditions that help families in fulfilling their tasks. We consider the family the basic unit of society.

This Conference builds upon the plan of action and recommendations of the population conferences in Bucharest and in Mexico City but it gives higher priority to the status and role of married women indeed occupy a key position for social change and economic development but there is a particular need to improve their access to income and safe livelihoods. education and health care particularly reproductive health and to remove legal and other barriers which impede their full participation in development As the document recognizes, these are all important in their own right, and also as a basis for population and development programmes. We also welcome that this draft programme of action highlights the role of men and the need for them to increase their responsibility in parenthood and in sexual and reproductive health and family planning. An indispensable step towards a better society is to guarantee equal rights for women and men.

Women must be given equal opportunity to participate as responsible partners in all areas of social economic, cultural and political life. In this context it is critically important that individuals and couples can access reproductive health and family planning information and services. and are able to decide freely the number of children they want, without any form of coercion. This is a fundamental principle of the Programme of Action.

It is also heartening that this conference is building on the

Vienna Declaration and the programme of action of the World Conference on Human Rights held last year which emphasizes the importance of elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

The wanted number of children and the reproductive behaviour of couples has evolved in view of socio-economic developments and technical innovations. The declining rate of child mortality, increased levels of education of both men and women, the fuller participation of women in the work force have significantly changed the desired number of children. The demand for quality sexual and reproductive health including family planning services has increased and will continue to do so. In trying to meet this demand, we must recall the principles of action which must guide us, even more than before, in the elaboration and implementation of population policies and programmes. Let me recall these principles:

- 1) Population programmes should be integrated into all development policies and poverty alleviation strategies taking into account the interdependence of economic, social and cultural factors within the overall framework of sustainable development.
- 2) All population policies and programmes must fully respect human rights; their implementation must neither be brought about by coercion nor be discriminatory.
- 3) International cooperation and the implementation of population-related activities must be based on mutual agreement and partnership between developed and developing countries. When formulating and implementing population strategies, the consequences for the environment must be seriously taken into account. The Rio Conference has clearly confirmed that these can no longer be disregarded without the danger of seriously

jeopardizing the life and chances for development of future generations.

The EU stresses the importance of achieving sustainable production and consumption patterns particularly in the developed countries.

4) Educational issues must be given much higher priority in population policies and programmes. Emphasis must be placed on strengthening the educational system at the primary and secondary level with increased access and completion, in particular for girls. Furthermore, due attention should be given to the development of information, education and communication strategies.

5) International cooperation must also extend to the major challenge of STDs including HIV/AIDS to the world population which jeopardizes all efforts devoted to development.

Mr. Chairman, the EU endorses the general framework of the final document more specifically with regard to:

1) The implementation of population policies is essentially a national responsibility which should receive the support of the international community. The implementation of national population policies is also crucial for the effectiveness of international aid.

2) Population policies should be neither coercive nor discriminatory and should fully respect human rights.

3) Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely on the number of their children and the spacing of births in an informed and responsible manner. Access to family planning, which is part of a more comprehensive system of reproductive health, must be guaranteed.

4) Population policies addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights should be integrated in overall primary health care strategies as part of broader development programmes

5) Abortion should not be promoted as a method of family planning. The present high levels of unsafe abortion urgently need to be addressed.

6) Priority should be given to improving primary health care and education with particular emphasis on the health of women and education of women and youth as well as to the reduction of maternal and infant mortality. The promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women in improving their status in society are priorities.

In the context of the above principles, it must be acknowledged that there are no strategies which are equally valid for all countries of the world; rather, account has to be taken of the cultural, ethical and religious, the social and economic and - as we have become fully aware since the Rio Conference - ecological conditions.

Mr. Chairman. international migration is clearly an important issue and we welcome the fact that agreement has already largely been reached on chapter X. of the document which addresses the sensitive subject in an appropriate manner. A number of countries including EU-countries are particularly affected by the consequences of migration.

3. We think that the decisive phase for the Programme of Action which we shall finalize here in Cairo will start after the end of the Conference. The follow-up is the phase in which our resolutions will

have to stand the test. The promises made on this programme of action should therefore duly take into account that they are of vital importance to many millions of people.

We believe that the system of the United Nations already disposes of institutions and mechanisms to meet the challenge which the results of Cairo will put before us. In view of a successful follow-up it is, however, necessary to improve the coordination of different organizations in a decisive and constructive way.

In addition to cooperation with Governments, it will be of vital importance to involve the people concerned. To do this successfully, close concentration with non-governmental organizations and the private sector is necessary. We therefore gratefully welcome that the NGOs have participated with such enthusiastic commitment and expertise during the preparatory phase and attend the Conference itself in impressive numbers. The European Union hopes for fruitful partnership and cooperation with them when it comes to implementing the Programme of Action of this conference.

4 Please allow me, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, to extend my thanks to all those who have prepared our meeting here in Cairo.

I wish our work the best of success."

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