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Pathfinder

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

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pathways in family planning

"FINDING NEW 'PATHS' FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH"

Monday, September 12, 1994 - Mr. President, Your Excellencies,
 Conference Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen: Pathfinder International
 would like to begin by thanking the Government and the people of Egypt
 for their warm hospitality. In particular, the work of His Excellency
 Dr. Maher Mahran, Egypt's Minister of Population and Family Welfare, has
 provided many successful models for advancing family planning in Egypt
 and throughout the developing world. The ICPD has been fortunate to
 benefit from his wise counsel and able leadership. Pathfinder would also

like to congratulate Dr. Nafis Sadik for her extraordinary vision as Executive Director of the UNFPA and Secretary General of these deliberations. Ms. Billie Miller, the NGO Forum Chairperson, and Mrs. Aziza Hussein, the Co-Chair and the NGO Steering Committee are also thanked for their innovative conceptualization of the NGO Forum. We are honored to have this opportunity to describe Pathfinder's family planning programs and successes to this august gathering.

For almost 40 years, Pathfinder International has been privileged to be in the vanguard of nongovernmental organizations that are working in partnership throughout the world to ensure that barriers were broken and progress assured in matters of reproductive health, sustainable development and gender equality that are central to this conference and to men and women everywhere.

Pathfinder International is a non-profit family planning organization committed to increasing the number of people in developing countries who have access to, and voluntarily use, family planning services. Operating through a US-based headquarters office in Boston, Massachusetts, 3 regional offices in Kenya, Turkey and Mexico and a growing network of country offices - now numbering 11 - Pathfinder provides financial support, technical assistance and contraceptive supplies to public and private institutions throughout the developing world. Through its highly qualified and culturally diverse staff, Pathfinder has built a legacy of trust and partnership with countless organizations, cultivating productive relationships and strategies that respond to local conditions and reproductive health needs.

Since its incorporation in 1957, Pathfinder has supported more than 2,000 projects in over 60 countries, programming nearly \$300

million in US government foreign assistance and privately donated funds Today, the organization's initiatives span nearly 30 countries and include a variety of highly effective service delivery models, training for program managers and service providers, technical assistance of grantee organizations, programs for adolescents, and efforts to integrate HIV-AIDS and STD prevention services into family planning programs.

Pathfinder and its local partners have fostered progress in many developing countries. Along the way, we have had many "lessons learned" over these past 40 years that are directly related to three "streams" of this important conference.

First, we have learned that NGOs, governments and their international partners must work together if sustainable development and sustainable progress are to be guaranteed. Just as the late - and justly famous - American politician Tip O'Neill (also a Bostonian like Pathfinder) used to say, "all politics are local...", so also it is true that "all enduring solutions are local". The first vital lesson is, therefore, that local leadership, local capacity-building, local linkages and listening to local voices about local priorities must guide our work. Pathfinder has also recognized that "South-South" collaboration, cooperation and sharing are essential We have, therefore, taken several measures to bring talented and experienced professionals from our three regions together to share strategies, to transfer skills and to assist Pathfinder in planning effectively.

A second, and compelling lesson, is that we and our local partners must focus on securing the health and well-being of women and men. Far too often in the past, we have acted as if family planning and reproductive health were "women's work" and "women's burdens". Nothing

could be further from the truth, in this time of the AIDS pandemic, spiraling rates of adolescent pregnancy and severe constriction of economic resources for nation and families alike.

These realities have genuine implications for local and national strategies to make reproductive health and family planning services more accessible and more acceptable. It means that resources must be provided for clinics so that they are able to offer the full range of reproductive health services

from innovative education and counselling, often in local language and clear, simple formulations, so that clients can receive preventive and promotive messages that change behavior or make informed choices;

to screening and counselling for STDs and HIV-AIDS;• to services for infertile couples;

to services for high-risk groups, including women who are suffering-from septic or incomplete abortions.

We must hear, and serve, our young who - whether we like it or not - are often confused and misinformed, but also often sexually active without information and with sometimes tragic consequences.

At the same time, Pathfinder, like many other NGOs, has learned the value of community-based strategies as a way of extending the reach of reproductive health services. The climate and trust that result from receiving services from "one's own" in languages and ways that increase familiarity cannot be overstated They, too, must receive resources and support, since community-based strategies often are the most cost

effective and significant ways of offering services to hard-to-reach populations .In shorts we have learned that, as a matter of policy, Pathfinder and its partners must work diligently and patiently to ensure that reproductive health services and information are made available to all:

without regard to gender;

without socio-economic limitations;

without restrictions based on age;

without regard to location.

I would be remiss if I did not briefly mention an equally important set of lessons that received the attention that many would have liked - namely the empowerment and equality of women. Women have been so critical to this global movement: as community agents, as mothers, as partners and as leaders. Women of great courage, and often at great personal risk and sacrifice, have stood and demanded their rights to choose; their rights to participate; their rights to advocate; their rights to secure a better future for their children than the lives they now endure. We who are concerned about the world's development and future prospects - be it from the perspective of the environment, the economy, sectoral analysis, spiritual health, or culture and tradition - cannot hope to succeed without the active and unfettered participation and talents of more than one - of the world's population. This may be one of the most important "lessons learned" by Pathfinder and by many others, and a lesson that we must carry away and build upon at Cairo and beyond.

Mr. President, honored delegates, The Plan of Action truly represents an effective dialogue and broad-based consensus. We must now turn our attention to its implementation. Many of us, have and are currently engaged in the implementation of programs throughout the world which are consistent with the spirit of The Plan of Action.

As our name indicates, we and our partners are continuing to search for, and sometimes to find, new paths - each locally appropriate, each in languages clearly understood and each designed to make accessible, high-quality, well-used and appropriate reproductive health services available to all who need them, in urban and rural communities throughout our world. Thank you very much your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

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