

As written

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(Please check against delivery)

1. In addressing the issues before us here at the Hague Forum it is important to bear in mind the broader context in which they are placed. The ICPD was one of the series of international UN conferences in the nineties. Their themes and outcomes are interwoven, and of course ICPD has particular links to the Platform of Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The impact that one conference has had - and where the implementation of it has fallen short of expectations - has consequences for all. ICPD+5 should be seen in this light. Furthermore the five years that have elapsed since Cairo are only one step in an ongoing process. What happens after ICPD+5 is just as significant as the immediate past.

2. This ongoing process also presupposes a close co-operation and an unfolding dialogue between governments and civil society organizations, among them women's organizations. Some groups in civil society are engaged in implementing action. Others have an advocacy role or act as watchdogs and path-finders. This sometimes makes them controversial but is necessary in order to change attitudes and develop new methodologies and responses. Civil society organizations must therefore be given space - also financially - to work with their issues.

3. In some areas implementation of the Programme has fallen short of what was expected. Those of a more overarching and compound character are two - gender equality, requiring changes also in male gender awareness, and the needs of young people. Profoundly serious specific concerns are also two - the spread of HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality rates, including more attention to post-abortion care. It must be underscored that these are outstanding challenges shared by all societies worldwide. All countries have considerable work still to do in most or all of these fields. It should also be recognized that the ability of poor countries to honour the ICPD commitments to a large extent is dependent on international measures to improve their economies.

4. The Cairo Programme of Action made a strong case for the empowerment of women as a linchpin of the new paradigm for population and development. This shift inevitably implies changes in traditional male roles and perceptions of what constitutes gender-sensitive male behaviour. Although it is included in the Programme, very little attention has been devoted to this particular dimension of gender equality in the period after Cairo, hampering any significant progress towards the kind of better balanced relationship sketched in the Programme of Action. Changes in male behaviour have consequences for, i.a., domestic violence against women and young girls, the attitudes of youth and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and STD's. Real gender equality - caring and sharing - is one of the main keys in the lock to many integrated concerns that this Forum is discussing. In the world of today there is a definite need to bridge the gender gap, if inroads are to be made in many fields central to ICPD. The Swedish government, with the support and collaboration of Denmark, has recently mounted a seminar in Africa on how also men can gain from increased gender equality and how more balanced gender relations can be

achieved. On Friday the results of this seminar will be presented here in a meeting open to all delegations.

5. There will soon be one billion young people, male and female, on this planet. Their different attitudes and values will determine what advances along the lines of the Cairo Programme of Action can be made in the coming century. Improved and more accessible sex education is one of the rights of young people. Sex education should include issues related to respect for each other, values and attitudes, gender equality, anatomy, growing up, young people's self-esteem, feelings and love. But sex education is not enough. If it is to be effective in preventing unwanted pregnancies and STD's, it has to be combined with youth-friendly services and information.

6. The epidemics of HIV and AIDS are spreading and constitute a serious threat to many communities world-wide. The ultimate consequence of the disease is higher morbidity and mortality, which in the decades to come will have an impact on the demographic structure, with concomitant effects on human development indicators: for instance, dependency ratios will worsen, life expectancy be reduced, and past gains in infant and child mortality will be reversed.

7. The Swedish government has launched a strategy which is a basis for further commitment to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigate its consequences. Our call today is that HIV prevention work should be strengthened as an integral part of improving sexual and reproductive health and rights among women and men - young and old.

8. Safe motherhood should a right for all women but is not so today. Despite the ICPD priorities maternal mortality rates are unacceptably high. In all likelihood the total annual figures for maternal deaths even over the past few decades are comparable to the death tolls in most of the many wars of this century. It should be noted that almost ninety percent of these maternal deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, making maternal mortality the health indicator with the largest discrepancy between developed and developing countries. Increased efforts have to be made to reduce maternal mortality. One element of especial concern, as defined by the ICPD, is the provision of high-quality post-abortion care to all women, both in countries where abortion is legal and where it is not. In many countries such services are still absent. Efforts must be made to implement the Programme of Action in this area.

9. In order to live up to the ambitions expressed in the Cairo Programme of Action proportionally more resources have to be devoted to the social services. Health, including reproductive and sexual health, and education have suffered from the economic recesses and constraints in the years following ICPD in Cairo. Both domestic budgets and international development co-operation have been affected. In recognition of this fact the Swedish government is planning to increase its allocations for development co-operation over the next few years, moving upwards from the 0.7 level adopted by the UN. Swedish ICPD- related development co-operation is mainstreamed and integrated. It is channelled both bilaterally and multilaterally. Sweden also hopes that the United States will consider again financially supporting the UNFPA in its important work.

10. On the threshold of the next millennium the twin issue of population and development is, together with the other themes raised in the major UN conferences of the nineties, one of the defining and critical challenges facing many generations to come. How the present generations couch their answers to those questions and how they attempt to transform them into reality will have a decisive influence on “the shape of things to come”. Let us show that we are prepared to accept this challenge. Governments must shoulder their responsibilities, and they must be prepared to involve and work with civil society. The call is now for action: action to put the Cairo commitments to work, action to set priorities; and action to carry the combined messages of the UN conferences into the national agendas of the twenty-first century.