

As written

STATEMENT BY

DR. TOUFIC ISMAIL

Deputy Minister of State for Planning

Head of the Syrian Delegation

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Mr. President,  
Heads of Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to extend appreciation, thanks and gratitude to the Government of The Netherlands for hosting this Forum.

I am pleased, also, to congratulate Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of UNFPA, on the convening of this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference represents an important step forward towards implementing the Programme of Action approved by ICPD. We are in a time in which assessment and reviewing process is considered one of the basic things to bring plans and work programmes to success. Thus, the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference and what accompanied it of national population programmes, need a stand such as the one represented by this conference. We are able, now, to review and assess achievements, identify challenges and draw the features and characteristics of future activities, which ensure the realization of our goals.

Probably what most characterizes ICPD is the multiple dimensions, which it added to the focus of population policies. It has become inclusive to all socio-economic life aspects and consequently, almost identical with the focus of the human development concept.

The Syrian Arab Republic has adopted and continues to adopt a strategy of comprehensive economic and social development, sustainable and balanced sectionally and geographically. With the framework of balanced development, topics related to populations issues are given high priority.

Education is provided **free** for all, male and female, without discrimination, at all educational levels. Population education, as a subject, has been introduced in the field of formal and informal education, particularly **after** the Cairo Conference, through activities carried out in cooperation with **UNFPA**.

The Government provides, **free** or at symbolic charge, health services, including reproductive health, family planning and sexually transmitted diseases; this being in addition to the health services provided by the private sector.

Development of the way RH services are being carried out has gone along with the content of the RH concept. These services have been expanded in Syria in the State institutions, NGOs and the private sector so that they would respond to the reality and requirement of the local communities.

Working in the field of RH, information, education and communication has led to noticeable improvement in health indicators during the past few years. The regular information system

shows an increase in the percentage of women enrolled in family planning to more than double in the last four years. Reproductive health services, as implemented in Syria, have led to an increase in pre and post natal care and a reduction in the rate of high-risk pregnancy due to spacing between pregnancies and improvement in the quality of reproductive health services.

The issue of gender equity and empowerment of women has been given great attention at the governmental and NGOs level. In cooperation among governmental bodies, NGOs, UNFPA and the other relevant international organizations, the concept of gender was disseminated, training manuals on gender and empowerment of women were prepared for capacity building workshops and training courses. Furthermore, the Central Bureau of Statistics currently participates, in cooperation with governmental parties, NGOs, and ESCWA in undertaking a wide-scoped project that aims at establishing a database on gender statistics.

Among the most significant forms of equity and empowerment of Syrian women are:

- Occupation of high ranking positions in legislative, executive and judicial authorities;
- reaching equal educational level as men, including having access to all kinds of educational institutions at all levels. The rate of female graduates to the total graduates is 50% in secondary level education, 47% in preparatory level and 40% in university level education.

NGOs, such as Women General Union, Youth Union, and **Labour** Force General Union play an important role in designing, preparing, implementing and evaluating population-related activities, in cooperation with the relevant governmental departments.

Among other areas of high priority, I would like to mention enhancing women empowerment, reducing income disparity between urban and rural areas, strengthening further NGOs participation and meeting the needs of youth. Details on these and other topics related to population issues would be provided in the deliberations of the Main Committee.

With regard to financial flow, the total allocated-local resources to cover the cost of **population**-related activities is 3 1.2 million dollars per year, while the technical assistance provided by UNFPA and other donors is 3 million dollars annually. It is less than 10% of the total cost of population-related activities.

It is noteworthy also that increasing the size of technical assistance provided by UNFPA and the donors would have an effective role **in promoting** and developing population-related programmes and activities.

With regard to institutional level, Syria has realized two significant steps after the Cairo ICPD. One relates to the approach of preparing and carrying out population programmes while the second relates to preparing a **draft** population policy. As for the first significant step, the integrated approach has been adopted to all population-related activities. Each of the **sub**-programmes is implemented in coordination with the different governmental departments and NGOs concerned. Syria was one of the early countries to adopt this integrated approach promoted by UNFPA.