

**Statement to the Thirty-Eighth Session of the
Commission on Population and Development**

Agenda Item 4

**Contribution of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on
Population and Development, in all its aspects, to the achievement of the internationally agreed
development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration**

Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2005/6)

**Ms. Mary Beth Weinberger
Chief, Population and Development Section
Population Division, DESA
United Nations**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, the report (E/CN.9/2005/6) has been prepared in response to decision 2004/1 of the Commission on Population and Development. In that decision, the Commission decided to consider in 2005 the contribution of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, in all its aspects, to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

In order to ensure that this report would draw upon the broad range of information and views on the role of the ICPD Programme of Action in fulfilling the internationally agreed development goals, the Population Division/DESA convened a meeting to review that question. The meeting drew together representatives from concerned United Nations offices, from the Millennium project team, and outside international experts. Copies of the proceedings of that meeting are available at the back of the conference room, in the volume titled “Seminar on the Relevance of Population Aspects for the Achievement of The Millennium Development Goals”. The proceedings can also be accessed electronically from the web site of the Population Division/DESA.

The report before you, Mr. Chairman, notes that population is at the core of development. Population trends influence, and are influenced by, progress towards achieving the development goals. In considering specific development goals, it is important to bear in mind that the ICPD Programme of Action has the over-arching aim of improving human welfare and promoting sustainable development. The Programme of Action was designed to address, in a comprehensive manner, the critical challenges and interrelationships between population and sustainable development.

The general conclusion of the report before you is that full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation would contribute significantly to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. Indeed, several ICPD goals are also included in the Millennium Declaration—notably the goals of reducing maternal and child mortality, of combating HIV/AIDS, of ensuring equal access of girls and boys to education and universal access to primary education, and of achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Programme of

Action and the key actions for its further implementation provide concrete steps for achieving those goals, pointing out that actions to achieve the Programme's goals relating to education, gender, mortality and health, including reproductive health, are mutually reinforcing. Notably, the Programme of Action's goal of ensuring access to reproductive health is closely linked to achievement of other goals regarding poverty reduction, gender, mortality and health, including HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Chairman, in the remaining time allotted to me, I would like to highlight a few of the report's specific points.

First, nations are at very different stages in the demographic transition, and are also at very different stages in fulfilling the agreed development goals. Today, countries earlier in the demographic transition—that is, the transition from high to lower levels of mortality and fertility—are generally also the countries that are furthest from fulfilling the development goals. In those settings, high rates of population growth typically coexist with fertility levels in excess of those desired as well as high numbers of mistimed births. These demographic challenges are intertwined with poor access to basic social services and slow progress in combating poverty.

Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, including measures to ensure that all couples and individuals have access to the information, education and means to choose the number and spacing of their children, would contribute to accelerating the transition to lower fertility in developing countries that still have high fertility levels. Slower population growth in turn would improve the ability of those countries to adjust to future population increases, to combat poverty, to protect and repair the environment, and to set the conditions for sustainable development.

The transition to lower fertility not only slows population growth but also leads to a population age composition that is favourable for development, as the number of workers increases relative to the numbers of children and older persons. Recent research has strengthened the evidence that this “demographic bonus” can contribute significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction, in contexts that also support development of human resources and employment creation. Implementation of the recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action, especially in regard to education and training, gender equality and health, including reproductive health, would also help create favourable conditions for economic growth and poverty reduction.

The broader development agenda extends beyond a focus on the countries that are far from achieving the development goals. The ICPD Programme of Action focuses on the needs of vulnerable groups and underserved groups in all countries. It also promotes the equal participation and sharing of responsibility of women and men in all areas of family and community life. And it provides a set of concrete recommendations regarding processes and partnerships for achieving those goals.

In conclusion, the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation offer guidance on ways of addressing the major development challenges of the present and future. Their full implementation would contribute significantly to the attainment of the objectives set by the United Nations Millennium Declaration as well as other internationally agreed development goals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.