



Check against Delivery

**United Nations Commission on  
Population and Development**

*Putting People First*

**Statement**

**by**

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the opening of this forty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Let me begin, Mr. Chairman, by commending you and the members of your Bureau on your work to prepare this session. We at UNFPA look forward to working closely with you and Member States on the important and timely issues before the Commission.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the important collaboration that UNFPA has with the Population Division and to thank, in particular, Hania Zlotnik and her colleagues, for making this successful partnership possible. We look forward to further strengthening this collaboration with the Population Division.

Mr. Chairman,

It is important that we continue to move forward with the collective wisdom that working in the field of population and development is about people and putting people first. During this year as we engage in discussions about achieving the Millennium Development Goals, advancing social and economic progress and financing for development, let us remember that the goal of development is to support people, especially the poor and marginalized, in their quest to improve their lives, reach their full potential and realize their human rights.

Our collective work towards achieving the goals and recommendations of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) will contribute to reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. The achievement of greater socio-economic development in the poorest countries will depend, to a large extent, on success in addressing population and development issues.

Progress depends on partnership—between governments, the United Nations, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector. I welcome the letters that were sent to the Commission by three non-governmental organizations: the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the World Youth Alliance and Population Action International. Their partnership and leadership are deeply appreciated.

Today, I would like to focus my remarks on two issues for which reports have been submitted. The first is population distribution, urbanization and internal migration and their implications for development, and the second is the flow of financial resources for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

### **Population distribution, urbanization and internal migration**

Let me begin by focusing on population distribution, urbanization and internal migration. As the reports point out, the world is undergoing the largest wave of urban growth in

history. This year for the first time ever, more than half of the world's people will be living in towns and cities.

The scale of ongoing urban growth is unprecedented and has marked differences in level and pace among all countries and regions. While Africa and Asia are currently the least urbanized regions, by 2030 they will have the most urban dwellers. The urban population of Africa and Asia is expected to double within a single generation. Urban growth will also continue in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in more developed regions, but at a slower pace.

This wave of urbanization is happening mostly in developing countries with very large increases that are occurring very rapidly. Between 2000 and 2030, Asia's urban population is expected to grow from 1.4 billion to 2.6 billion, Africa's from nearly 300 million to 740 million, and Latin America and the Caribbean from nearly 400 million to more than 600 million. Today some 62 million people are added each year to the urban population in less developed regions, compared to no more than 2 million to 3 million additional urban dwellers each year in the more developed regions. There is not one country or region that is exempt from the implications, benefits and challenges of this growth.

The main point that I would like to stress today, and which we made in our 2007 State of World Population report, is that urbanization can play a very positive role in social and economic development IF countries plan ahead now and respond with appropriate policies and programmes to address future urban growth.

Throughout history, cities have been engines for innovation, growth and productivity. Cities can provide access to the benefits of technology, to social and health services and basic infrastructure. Cities facilitate social change through the educational and cultural opportunities they provide.

But for many poor city dwellers whose numbers are growing, these opportunities are not fully realized. There are already one billion people living in slums, in substandard conditions that deny the right to an adequate standard of living. Urban mismanagement and lack of planning have resulted in overcrowding, lack of public services, lack of clean water and sanitation, and inadequate infrastructure in many cities in less developed regions.

In response, many governments have adopted measures to reduce or reverse rural to urban migration, with little success. For many people, cities are places of opportunity and hope, and it is impossible to stop people from pursuing their dreams for a better life. Furthermore, the remittances of migrants in cities are an important source of income for the relatives they leave behind.

The real issue is not just that cities grow too fast, but that governments are not prepared to absorb urban growth. The challenge is to learn how to exploit the possibilities that better cities provide. I believe that one of the most important elements of this debate is

the need to promote a change in attitude. It is time to embrace urbanization as a good thing for development and for people.

This was the main message of the UNFPA *2007 State of World Population report: Unleashing the potential of urban growth*. Launched last year, the report generated unprecedented media coverage and interest.

First and foremost is the need for a pro-active approach that is focused on planning and managing change. Given the wave of future urban growth, a longer-term vision is essential. Urgent action is needed to improve housing and living conditions, ensure access to basic social services and generate employment.

Realistic planning calls for explicit consideration of the needs, rights and participation of the poor. A major issue is land. Providing minimally serviced land for the poor will help meet present and future needs. Investing in education and health, including reproductive health and voluntary family planning, is one of the best ways to address urban population growth.

I would also like to draw your attention to the large youth population in cities in less developed countries, particularly in urban slums. In response, greater investments are needed to provide young people with basic services, education, employment and housing. Failure to invest in youth will derail efforts to reduce poverty and increase chances for social unrest.

It is also important, given the similarity of problems in cities across the world, that experiences are shared. Greater communication between cities, focusing on common challenges such as stressed infrastructure and best practices, is becoming more and more common, and this is a positive development that will continue to expand.

As we look to the future, environmental challenges, including climate change, require urgent attention. Given the level of resources, climate change will affect poor countries, cities and individuals more severely. How cities cope with these challenges will be a great part of the story of how countries and the international community respond. There is no doubt that the response will have to be characterized by imaginative planning and foresight, with public and private sectors and development partners sharing the burden and cost.

It is also important that policies that address urban growth do not come at the expense of strategies for rural development. Both are needed, and one benefits the other. Although urban areas account for an increasing share of the poor, the large majority of poor people still live in the rural areas of developing countries. Therefore investments need to be balanced and targeted to both urban and rural populations.

Mr. Chairman,

UNFPA is committed to working with the Population Division to bring the analysis of population trends such as urban growth into national development discussions. We are guided in our work by the ICPD Programme of Action and the Millennium Declaration. The ICPD agreement urges Governments to strengthen capacity to respond to the pressures caused by rapid urbanization, by strengthening urban management and ensuring broad-based participation. The ICPD Programme of Action further calls on Governments to respond to the needs of all citizens, including urban squatters, for personal safety, basic infrastructure and services, to eliminate health and social problems resulting from overcrowding and disasters.

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by world leaders in 2000, calls attention to urban poverty, and urges the international community to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

In response to these calls, UNFPA is working with countries, encouraging policy makers to proactively address urban growth, with particular emphasis on providing services to the poor and most vulnerable. We continue to provide technical guidance to build national capacity.

Just to give you an idea of what we are doing, I would like to highlight a few concrete examples. In Burkina Faso, we provided technical and financial support for a national symposium on migration to foster an effective response. In Ethiopia, we supported the establishment of national and regional population councils. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, UNFPA assisted the Government in revising its population policy. The new policy focuses on rural development, including secure land entitlements, and investments in education, employment and improved health services. In Senegal, we participated in positioning migration and urbanization issues within the poverty reduction strategy papers review. And in Nigeria, UNFPA supported the formulation of the national population policy, which addresses the country's challenges of urbanization and internal migration.

As I have mentioned, we encourage policy dialogue, and support capacity building, data collection, research and advocacy. We have a rights-based and culture and gender-sensitive approach.

In order to demonstrate the importance of rethinking policies for a sustained urban future, UNFPA is pleased to be co-organizing, with the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and UN-Habitat, a side event on this topic tomorrow.

### **ICPD Financial Flows**

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to turn now to the issue of financial flows for the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action.

The good news is that donor assistance to population activities continues to increase. Once all data are in, donor assistance is expected to reach \$8.1 billion in 2006. We estimate domestic resources in 2006 to be \$23 billion. And we expect continued increases in donor and domestic resources in both 2007 and 2008.

Rising support to the ICPD Programme of Action is demonstrated by rising contributions to UNFPA and a widening donor base. In 2007, a record 182 donor countries provided voluntary contributions, including all countries in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is a powerful symbol of the importance that Member States attach to the issues of population and development. And it attests to the commitment of less developed countries.

Despite their commitment, most less developed countries cannot mobilize sufficient resources to fund population, gender and reproductive health programmes. They continue to rely on donor assistance. We see this clearly as countries embark on the 2010 round of censuses. This is the most expensive exercise in national statistics, and it is threatened by lack of financing. The need for increased resources to undertake censuses has been expressed to UNFPA by many countries to which we provide support.

As you know, censuses provide the data needed to guide development. And UNFPA is working with the UN Statistics Division and other partners on the 2010 census round. Solid data are also necessary for monitoring the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This includes the new target, under MDG 5 to improve maternal health, of universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

Despite the central importance of data to development, it is important to note that resource mobilization continues to be dependent on a few key players. Population assistance originates with a few major donors and the majority of domestic resources are mobilized in a few large developing countries. This creates a situation that is far from optimal in terms of predictability, reliability and sustainability.

While the flow of resources for population assistance is on the rise, which is most welcome and I thank all governments for their contributions, I would like to caution that, even if estimates and projections hold and the financial targets are surpassed, the resources mobilized will not be sufficient to meet current needs, which have grown dramatically since the ICPD targets were agreed upon a decade and a half ago.

At that time, the population and health situation in the world was much different from what it is today. For one thing, no one had foreseen the escalation of the AIDS pandemic from 14 million people living with HIV in 1994 to 33 million people today. Since 1994, health-care costs have increased substantially, while the value of the dollar has gone down.

As a result, the ICPD financial target of \$18.5 billion in 2005 is not sufficient to meet current developing country needs in the areas of family planning, sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, and basic research, data and population and development policy analysis.

HIV/AIDS activities continue to receive by far the largest proportion of population assistance and funding for family planning lags far behind. In fact, donor assistance for family planning as a percentage of all population assistance has decreased considerably since Cairo, from 55 per cent in 1995 to 7 per cent in 2005. If not reversed, the lack of financing for family planning threatens efforts to reduce poverty, improve health and advance women's empowerment.

The victims of this funding gap are poor women in poor countries who cannot exercise their reproductive rights and plan their families. It is a serious problem that needs to be urgently addressed. Today, there are 200 million women in the developing world with unmet need for effective contraception and the highest unmet need is in Africa. The result is increasing numbers of unwanted pregnancies, rising rates of unsafe abortion, and increased risks to the lives of women and children.

Mr. Chairman,

The benefits of reproductive health care, including family planning, cannot be overstated. We will not attain the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 5 on maternal health, if we do not ensure universal access to reproductive health. Sexual and reproductive health is essential to women's empowerment and gender equality. Family planning is key to maternal and child health. It is estimated that ensuring access to family planning alone would reduce maternal deaths by 20 to 35 per cent and child deaths by 20 per cent.

One of the key messages here is that, if not reversed, the trend towards less funding for family planning and reproductive health will have serious implications for the ability of countries to address unmet need for such services and could undermine efforts to attain universal access to reproductive health by 2015. This in turn affects population dynamics and conditions for development, especially poverty reduction.

Today, I call on countries to increase investments in all areas of the ICPD population package, including support of reproductive health commodity security and, of course, data collection, analysis and its use for development planning.

In closing, I would like to stress that the realization of a healthy and productive population requires increased investments in the social sector and this means putting people first. As we engage this year in discussions about AIDS, the Millennium Development Goals and financing for development, let us never forget the people that the United Nations was created to serve. And let us increase investments in women and young people, who by their very nature are catalysts of development and agents of positive change. I thank you.