

**Statement to the Commission on Population and Development
Acting as Preparatory Committee for the Special Session
of the General Assembly**

As written

BANGLADESH

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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. PROFESSOR (DR.) M. AMANULLAH

STATE MINISTER FOR

HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH

AND

LEADER OF THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION

AT THE

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNGA ON ICPD FOLLOW UP

NEW YORK, 24 MARCH 1999

Mr. Chairman,

It is a special delight for the Bangladesh delegation to see you elected by acclamation as the as the Chairman of this Preparatory Committee of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) follow up. Our felicitations also go to your colleagues in the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

Soon after Bangladesh was born, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman for the first time declared that population issue was the primary concern for the newly independent nation. We have since formulated population policies and programmes as a national priority. The International Conference on Population and Development has given us new directions and reinforced our existing programmes.

We have made all efforts to integrate development with our population programmes. Bangladesh achieved remarkable success in demographic transition against considerable socio-economic odds.

A combination of factors favoured the outcome of our efforts:

Sustained commitment of the Government;
method-mix cafeteria approach for providing primary and reproductive health care services;
committed grassroots-level workers providing one to one service;
active collaboration between the Government and the NGOs;
support of civil society;
proactive role of the mass media;
expansion of education with particular focus on girls' education;

women's empowerment and income generation activities, through, among others, microcredit programmes

are some of the factors that contributed positively to our efforts.

Hopefully, these will lead to our goal of achieving replacement level of fertility (NRR-1) by the year 2005. However, many challenges will still remain. Given the fact that 50 per cent of our population is below 15, adolescent health will be one such challenge that we will have to deal with in the near future.

Mr. Chairman,

We crossed a watershed in Cairo where we arrived at new understanding on how to better chalk out policies on population. We reoriented our efforts with people in mind, not their numbers. The needs of women and men became the primary objectives to seek — not only the pursuit of demographic targets. In order to translate the new paradigm into action, as a very first step soon **after** Cairo, we in Bangladesh constituted a broad-based National Committee for implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We pursued the goals subsequently through a National Plan of Action. In recent years, under the enlightened leadership and personal commitment of our Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina**, we have gained considerable progress in implementation of our National Plan of Action.

Although Bangladesh's achievement in the population sector is considered exemplary, there is still much that we could have done. Resource constraints had been and continue to be the main obstacle in attaining our desired goal. This is true for most developing countries. This point came up quite emphatically in the Hague Forum last month.

There had been some increase in the level of international **assistance**—though far short of the **target**—in the immediate aftermath of Cairo. But in two years, the flow became stagnant, and since 1998 it started tapering off. Significantly, developing countries have been more forthcoming in mobilising domestic resources compared to international assistance.

The donor community has a critically important role in financing population activities. In many countries, particularly in the least developed ones, funding for population activity is donor-driven. Naturally without adequate resources, the implementation of ICPD Programme of Action will falter. Given the responsibility for supporting national level implementation, increase in resources for UNFPA is a must.

Mr. Chairman,

Considerable progress has been achieved in most countries in the years since Cairo. As we prepare for the UNGA Special Session to review and appraise the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, we should critically examine how far we have come and where we would focus further. We need to make renewed commitment and firm determination for the long journey ahead of us. Our achievement so far will encourage us in the further implementation of the Programme of Action. We joined this **PrepCom** in that spirit.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.