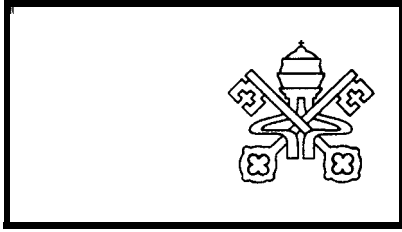


Statement to the Commission on Population and Development  
Acting as Preparatory Committee for the Special Session  
of the General Assembly

As written



# HOLY SEE

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS 25 EAST 39th STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016-0903 (212) 370-7885

STATEMENT BY **H. E. BISHOP JAMES T. MCHUGH**  
**DEPUTY HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE**  
TO THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION  
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT,  
ACTING AS **THE** PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL **ASSEMBLY** ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL  
OF **THE** IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM OF ACTION  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

NEW YORK, 24 MARCH 1999

**Statement by H. E. Bishop James T. McHugh  
Deputy Head of Delegation of the Holy See  
to the Thirty-second session of the Commission  
on Population and Development,  
acting as the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session  
of the General Assembly on the review and appraisal  
of the implementation of the Programme of Action  
of the International Conference on Population and Development**

New York, 24 March 1999

Mr. Chairman:

The International Conference on Population and Development emphasized the importance of the interrelationship between population and development. In the five years since the Cairo Conference, the world has attempted to implement the Programme of Action, and use the insights of the ICPD to help shape other aspects of development.

During those five years, the Holy See has continued to insist that the dignity of the person and basic human rights, especially the right to life, are promoted and protected, recognizing that human beings are at the center of concerns for development. It has also held strongly to the call for the full respect for various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of each woman and man.

Now, as the United Nations once again takes up the process of review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD, the Holy See restates its commitment to help in finding answers to the difficult problems that the world continues to face.

In this follow-up process, there is need for a closer look at issues involving development, especially regarding the **reduction** of poverty and the provision of basic social services including education, clean water and sanitation and the elimination of widespread endemic diseases.

The Holy See repeats its recognition that true development can never be reduced to a merely physical dimension and that an overall concern for education and well-being of the total person must be recognized. In some ways a disproportionate amount of attention has been given to a very limited understanding of reproductive health.

The Cairo Conference enabled governments to discuss a wide range of topics, including the improvements of the status of women throughout the world, particularly regarding their health, access to education and their full and equal participation in development; the rejection of all forms of coercion in the implementation of population policies; the recognition of the family as the fundamental unit of society based on marriage and the expanding phenomenon and impact of migration.

The role of the family as the basic unit of society is recognized and supported by the United Nations and supported by member nations. The responsibility of men and women regarding their sexuality can only be expressed in the family and the individualistic concept of sexuality, at times advocated at Cairo, is a rejection of the role of the family.

Following upon the recognition of the role of the family is the issue of education and the provision of health care to adolescents. The rights and duties of parents were affirmed at Cairo, and the first responsibility toward the education and socialization of children belongs to parents.

In light of recent demographic projections released by the United Nations Population Division, the aging of the world's population calls for immediate attention and action. Changes in the proportions between those who are economically active and those who are retired or dependent will continue to create more strains on pension and social security systems and health care services. Governments must foster the intrinsic value of persons of all ages and insure economic and social policies that support older persons without burdening the young and the working sector of the population.

The Holy See understands that the phenomenon of migration is a concern of all states. It is closely related to issues of development and population and the international community must extend assistance and protection to all migrants and their families.

The ICPD Programme of Action reaffirms United Nations' policy that in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. In this context, the present practice of 'emergency and post-coital contraception' often involves abortifacient procedures or chemicals. It **cannot** be simply considered application of family planning and even less the exercise of an **undefined** and nebulous reproductive right.

The Holy See recognizes these practices as abortive, camouflaged as a means of contraception and often contrary to national legislative systems that grant legal protection to human life from the moment of conception.

Further, the Holy See rejects any recognition of a right to abortion through policies aimed at creating new categories of personal rights or including health services that promote 'safe abortion'. Abortion is never safe for the unborn child and often involves physical and or psychological dangers for the mother.

As something of a multiplication of rights is being attempted, the Holy See points out the fact that all rights will fade if the moral dimension of human rights and the obligations and responsibilities of states, as well as each individual, to protect every human being are not more clearly **realized**. In this regard, the importance of informed consent must be strongly emphasized to protect human rights and to ensure trust. Furthermore, no nation should be forced to change or violate its own laws that prohibit or regulate abortion practices, nor should any woman be forced to undergo abortion.

In this preparatory committee meeting, as at previous International Conferences, the Holy See realizes its obligation to continue to affirm protection of all human beings and to state that, as in the past, nothing that the Holy See has done in this process should be understood or interpreted as an endorsement of concepts it cannot support for moral reasons. Especially nothing is to be understood to imply that the Holy See endorses abortion or has in any way changed its moral position concerning abortion, contraception, or sterilization or the use of condoms in HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

The Holy See looks forward to a continuation of the spirit of cooperation that has marked the work of the United Nations, especially during the past few weeks. Honest and forthright dialogue and discussion lead to understanding and agreement. We are all motivated by a spirit of solidarity to ensure respect for human dignity and fundamental human rights and to pursue policies of sustainable development that benefit all persons and enhance the progress of peoples in every nation, continent and region.