

**Statement to the Commission on Population and Development**  
**Thirty-second session, March 1999**

As written

PERMANENT MISSION OF

**MALAYSIA**

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

813 EAST 43rd STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 • (212) 986-6310

**STATEMENT BY DR. RAJ KARIM**  
**DELEGATION OF MALAYSIA AT THE 32ND SESSION OF**  
**THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 1999**  
**NEW YORK**

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Malaysian delegation joins in congratulating you on your election and it has been a privilege to have worked with you in the last bureau. We also join other distinguished delegations in commending the Secretariat for the enormous amount of hard work and dedication in enabling us to have clear and concise documents and reports that are useful not only for discussion during this Commission but also as reference documents in our daily work.

Mr. Chairman, the reports tabled before us at this Commission and especially under this agenda item are historical documents as they serve as a bench mark for countries at the close of this century's to assess progress or otherwise in ensuring population growth, structure and distribution based on the concept of people centered development that we agreed upon in Cairo.

Mr. Chairman, in considering the reports of the Secretary General on "Work Demographic Trends" and "Programme Implementation and Progress of Work in the field of Population in 1998", while some trends are positive as in lowering the population growth rates in most countries, we need to be aware of the problems faced by developed countries where fertility is significantly below the level necessary for the replacement of generations as much as we need to be aware of the problems of some developing countries where **TFR** remains high.

Mr. Chairman, with this concern at hand, Malaysia is among the many countries undergoing a demographic transition where the rapid progress of **urbanization** and **industrialization** together with improvement in basic social services and health care and the reduction of poverty, has led to lowering of our maternal and child mortality and fertility and increased expectancy of life. **Our** almost universal primary education of children in schools with no gender gap, higher proportion of girls than boys in tertiary education institutions, increase of women's participation in **labour** force and delay in age of marriage and first births are beginning to be depicted as trends in developed societies with low **TFR** especially among urban and the more educated population groups.

Mr. Chairman, this example is an illustration of the issues many of us in developing countries including Malaysia are faced with. As policy makers and planners we need to provide our governments with answers such as “when and how do we prop up or slow down fertility”. In other words, we faced the challenges on how to attain an optimum or balanced population growth so that we can prevent rapid aging of our population and have sufficient numbers for our **labour** force. This is an issue Malaysia is currently addressing.

In supporting the good work done by the Population Division, Malaysia would like to propose that in its analysis of population policies and strategies as contained in the reports, the Population Division provides some insight into specific country analysis in order to share experiences of those who have undergone the process.

Mr. Chairman, in considering population structure, Malaysia as many other developing countries is at the cross roads where we yet have a young population whose numbers will continue to increase over the next two decades while at the same time the proportion of the elderly would increase. We therefore need to put in additional resources to benefit both from the demographic bonus of the young and for a healthy and productive life for older persons. Hence, we face another challenge of reconsideration of priorities and allocation or reallocation of sufficient resources. This balancing act is complex in normal times let alone in the times of economic crisis facing us in Asia.

Mr. Chairman, this critical issue of resources and priorities needs to be seriously considered and we therefore urge the Secretariat to address these issues in future analyses of population and development trends. While we have made progress in basic indicators as reflected in the **reports**, such as decrease in child mortality, increase in contraceptive prevalence and decline in fertility rate, we must ensure that our progress is not negated by the economic crisis especially in countries with already scarce resources and weak infrastructure. Malaysia would therefore like to propose that this issue be addressed during next year’s theme of Population, Gender and Development. We know that women in developing countries are in disadvantaged positions and

trends in countries effected by the crisis show that women are worst effected as they continue to be add on the extra burden of being overworked and under nourished. Malaysia would therefore like to support Dr. **Nafis** Sadik's statement in continuing to focus our priority on addressing basic issues of reproductive health and rights, HIV/Aids, maternal mortality and morbidity and adolescent reproductive health and sexuality.

Mr. Chairman, the Malaysian delegation strongly supports the proposed Programme of Work of the Population Division for biennium **2000 - 2001** and congratulates them for the timely analysis and dissemination of information, especially those that provide for a “quick look” as in the wall charts. We wish them continued success.

I thank you Mr. chairman.