

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

As written

Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations



STATEMENT BY

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HEAD OF DELEGATION OF MALAYSIA**

AT

**THE 32ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT ACTING AS THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR
THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE
REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**THURSDAY, 25 MARCH 1999
NEW YORK**

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation joins in congratulating you on your election and we are confident that your able leadership will steer us towards smooth progress of this Prep. Comm. We would also like to congratulate UNFPA and the Population Division for the reports and to Dr. Nafis Sadik for her guidance and insights and for her dynamic statement.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Malaysia would like to take this opportunity to provide some updates since we adopted the Program for Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. We are pleased to report that Malaysia has developed its National Plan of Action on Population and Development based on the recognition and **cognisance** of the plurality of our society where people from diverse cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds live in peace, harmony, free from discrimination and are able to make their own choices concerning their lives.

3. This National Plan will be updated in line with this quinquenal review and will be part of a National Strategic Plan on Population and Development 2001-2020 beginning with the 8th Malaysia Plan 2001-2005. This would enable population issues to continue to be integrated with the vital links of sustainable development and environment, alleviation of poverty and provision of basic social services. We are fortunate to have an enabling environment for this process in accordance with the government's continuing thrust for a balanced development; improvement of quality of life; reducing the poverty, gender and equity gap; and due priority to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Mr. Chairman,

4. In line with the central theme of the Program of Action on reproductive health as a basic right and social justice to the population, especially women in the reproductive age group, the girl child, adolescents and youth, Malaysia has formulated a Policy Paper on Reproductive Health based on a human development approach which transcends the boundaries of the health sector into a multi- and inter-agency strategy that addresses the psychosocial, socio-cultural, behavioral and user perspective of reproductive health, rights and responsibilities. We are able to proceed into the more complex and sensitive dimensions of reproductive health, having put in place a sound and wide network of health infrastructure with comprehensive reproductive health services integrated into primary health care. Reproductive health services including family planning are available, accessible and affordable to the population based on free and informed choice of couples, without any coercion or discrimination. Health of women, children and families have been the primary objective. Maternal mortality and morbidity has continued to receive priority over more than three decades and through a multiple strategy approach including that of Safe Motherhood Initiative, we are able to provide 99% safe deliveries by trained personnel and essential obstetric care at all district hospitals. The confidential Enquiry System of Maternal Mortality initiated in 1991 provides for continuous monitoring and improvement in quality of care.

5. Malaysia is currently looking at alternative models for delivery of reproductive health services to address the emerging issues of adolescent and youth reproductive health and sexuality and those related to gender, violence, abuse, STD, HIV/AIDS, among others. The National Study on Reproductive Health and Sexuality of adolescents and youth 1994-1996, has provided us with evidence based strategies to pursue several initiatives with active involvement and participation of **NGOs**, the private sector and the youth themselves. These issues related to social behavior and lifestyle have been included as an integral part of the National Master Plan for Social Action and Intervention, which is led by a high level Cabinet Committee initiated in 1996. Extra budgetary funds have enabled the formulation and implementation

of various Education and Training Modules for Adolescents and parents to enable them to make appropriate decisions and choices, practice healthy behavior and lifestyle, prevent unwanted pregnancy, STD, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse among others. The road has not been smooth nor easy, and even as I speak, a public debate is on going regarding the need for sex education in schools, the terminology and interpretation of reproductive health, sexual harassment, among others.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Gender, population and development is also receiving more attention since Cairo and Beijing Conferences. Extra-budgetary funds have been allocated especially this year to expand programs for disadvantaged women such as women-headed households, the poor and those in difficult circumstances, highlighted since the enactment of the 1996 Domestic Violence Act. In this regard, a Comprehensive Child Act is due to be tabled in Parliament this year which would provide for greater responsibility of parents, and prevention and **counselling** for all forms of violence, abuse and neglect of children and young persons including sexual abuse, incest and exploitation.

7. In line with the concept of people centered development, Malaysia gives recognition to the family institution and the importance of families in social and economic development. The National Population and Family Development Board, acting as a focal point, has developed a Strategic Plan for Family Development and Parenting to enable this to be a cross-cutting consideration in formulation of programs that are family, gender and user friendly. Recognizing the fact that the country is undergoing a demographic transition, policies have been developed for productive and skilled labor force which recognize the participation of **women**, -and for a-productive and healthy aging in addition to ways to benefit from the demographic bonus of the young.

Mr. Chairman,

8. Malaysia recognizes that the government alone cannot realize the effective implementation of Cairo goals without collaboration, cooperation and consultations of all sectors. The Government of Malaysia records its appreciation to all **NGOs**, the private sector and civil society and international community specifically UNFPA that have forged linkages in enabling the attainment of these goals. We have progressed, but we have much more to do. The economic downturn has affected us, but we are fortunate to have the safeguards of health, education and other basic social services which have minimized the effects especially on the poor, and self-employed. Strategic smart alliances and smart partnerships with the private sector and **NGOs** have optimized use of available resources.

9. While Malaysia has been able to manage the effects of the economic crises thus far, we are aware of some countries for whom resources are urgently required. Malaysia, therefore, urges that in considering the mobilization of resources, due priority be given to countries in need in order to ensure that gains made are not jeopardized.

10. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to make Cairo goals a reality and to give people the choice, freedom and dignity they deserve.

I thank you.