

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

**As written**

**Statement by Mr. Ananta Raj Pandey, Head of the Nepalese Delegation and Joint  
Secretary in the Ministry of Population and Environment,  
at the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly on ICPD Follow-up**

**New York, 26 March 1999**

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Mr. Chairman

First of all, my delegation would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman to this important meeting.

We would also like to associate ourselves with the statement earlier made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman, we are living in a demographically divided world – one is of rapidly growing population and urbanization overwhelming the carrying capacity of the Earth's eco-system and another is of graying population facing social problems and consuming a bulk of energy and natural resources. The developed countries have already completed its demographic transition. But the least developing countries have yet to complete the transition.

Mr. Chairman,

A widening gap in economic opportunity also parallels the demographic divide. The richest fifth of the world's population produces more than 80 per cent of the gross world product while the poorest fifth accounts for a little over 1 per cent. This underscores the inextricable relationship between population growth, poverty, environmental deterioration, social violence and political and socio-economic instability. This is one of the **major** areas Mr. Chairman, that my delegation considers, of prime importance to work together with the international **community** in the United Nations and outside of it to address these issues in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr. Chairman.

I would like to recall that the Cairo Conference was a landmark event in our approach to population and development issues. It identified a strategy to stabilize world population growth and achieve sustainable development by addressing reproductive health and rights and the responsibility of an individual. **Our** task here is to work together for attaining more institutional reforms, increased service integration, policy coordination, more effective decentralization, empowerment, gender mainstreaming and wider involvement of women in policy and decision-making. There is, however, an urgent need for renewed and sustained political commitment to the principles and goals of the Programme of Action adopted by consensus in Cairo **five** years ago. Mr. Chairman in this light, we are appreciative of the Secretary-General's report contained in the document E/CN.9/1999/PC/4. We subscribe to most of the views contained therein.

Mr. Chairman

Nepal's population, at present, is estimated to be 22 million and will reach 30 million by 2011 at an annual growth rate of 2.4 per cent. The total population of the country since 1961 has more than

doubled. It has severely strained the quality of available natural resources as well as the human resources. The swelling population has seriously hindered our efforts in maintaining the quality of the environment, in generating additional employment, in alleviating poverty and in providing adequate social services especially education and health. During the last 40 years, Nepal has significantly reduced the death rate **from** 22 to 13 per 1000 population while the birth rate still remains high at 37 per 1000 population. The **total** fertility rate was declining very slowly from 6 to 4.6 in the last 20 years mainly because of very young population in the reproductive age, early marriage, son preference, prevailing socio-cultural environment and low literacy level among women. The contraceptive prevalence rate in the country is about 30 per cent with an unmet need of 31 per cent. Unless we strive for achieving desired socio-economic goals in a positive way, family planning alone is not deemed to reduce population growth rate at the level appropriate for sustainable development

In addition to population growth rate, the uneven distribution of population in rugged topography poses still another problem for distributing adequate infrastructure and social services. About 25 per cent of the total population migrating internally and 30 percent migrating **from** rural to urban areas in Nepal calls for serious population redistribution policies in the country. Following the ICPD, our government has conducted a series of national level studies to formulate appropriate population redistribution policies and now reflected in our most recent five-year plan.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal has made substantial **progress** in reducing infant and maternal mortality rates, increasing educational access and reducing gender gaps. Still, we lag behind our South Asian neighbours on many social indicators including the reproductive health. In the case of 56 per cent of the total births in country, mother did not receive antenatal care; 90 per cent of births occur at home and 27 per cent of mothers 15-49 years die due to complications arising from childbirth. Lower life expectancy of females than males is indicative of lower socio-economic and health status of women in the country. To tackle these problems, our government has launched reproductive health strategy embracing family planning, safe motherhood, prevention and management of the complications of abortion, treatment of HIV/AIDS, prevention and management of infertility, improvement of adolescent reproductive health and problems of elderly, especially women with the help of local bodies and NGOs. These progresses have been made in the aftermath of ICPD recommendations.

Mr. Chairman,

Like other developing countries, Nepal is trying to accelerate the pace of development with its limited resource base. The Ninth-Five Year Plan of Nepal strives to reduce the total fertility rate to replacement level in 20 years by promoting a two child family norm. Our experience shows that without effectively integrating population issues into **development** programme, not much could be gained in the way of fertility reduction.

Mr. Chairman,

I hope that the deliberations in this distinguished gathering of international government representatives, donors and NGOs can recommit ourselves to fully and effectively implement the recommendations of ICPD and ICPD+5 in the days to come.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.