

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

As written



# PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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AT -

ICPD + 5 PREPCOM  
FOR SPECIAL SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
(24-31 MARCH 1999)

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Mr. Chairman  
Distinguished Delegates,

I, on behalf of Pakistan delegation, extend to you and members of the Bureau congratulations on being elected to steer proceedings of **PrepCom** and we are confident that **PrepCom** is in **safe** hands.

Pakistan was one of the most populous countries of the world. It had witnessed the highest population growth rate of **3.1%** ~~for~~ **around** two decades during 1974-1994. Pakistan is still the seventh most populous country **in the** world. Its latest census of 1998 shows that with country's inter-censal growth rate of **2.6%**, the population of Pakistan is 130.6 million. The current population growth rate is **2.4%**, contraceptive prevalent rate 27% and total fertility rate 4.8. These indicators, however, are indicative that demographic transition in Pakistan has started. However, population is and would remain a serious concern for Pakistan during half of 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Pakistan's participation at the highest level was fully reflective of this concern.

Pakistan is a willing signatory to the ICPD and it has adopted its Plan of Action as a source of guidance for shaping of country's population and development policy. Pakistan's vision for 2020 is also guided **from** the declarations/recommendations emanating **from** this Conference. The population issue is an integral part of the population and development policy of Pakistan which recognizes the concerted efforts required to deal with the issue of population and development in its multiple facets through collaborative **efforts** of a broad range of stakeholders including public and private institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations. The policy emphasizes that population and development is a responsibility of all citizens of Pakistan and, therefore, it addresses both the government and the civil society. It places emphasis on ~~mobii~~ broad-based support as well as securing sustained political support for providing universal access to reproductive health services including family planning. However, the population policy operates within the boundary of religious, ethical and cultural values of the people of Pakistan in line with the stipulations of ICPD-POA preamble. This policy has already become operative in our Nii Five Year Development **Plan** commencing July, 1998. So **far we have** made substantial progress in improving the reproductive health indicators. The total fertility rate has **fallen**, **contraceptive** prevalence has risen, and infant and maternal mortality rates have registered appreciable decline. **After** ICPD, we have tested several new initiatives both **for** improving the availability and **accessibility** of services as well as improving the quality. These initiatives include, inter ~~alia~~, integration of reproductive health services into health delivery system, provision of **high-quality**, client-responsive services, enhancing access to **full** range of safe and reliable family planning methods, **awareness** of risks of maternal mortality and morbidity, efforts **to** prevent **STDs**, HIV/AIDS, and promoting male involvement through advocacy. Our reproductive health indicators, however, still require considerable improvement to match the international standards. Our **efforts** will continue.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Pakistan is also putting in substantial efforts to improve its ranking in gender equity index. We have acceded to CEDAW in 1996. We are following the recommendations of ICPD and the Beijing Conference. To operationalize these recommendations most effectively, a National Plan of Action for Women has been launched with the highest political commitment through an announcement made by the Prime Minister in his speech on the Independence Day, 1998. The same has also been reiterated by him in his message on Women's Day, March 8, 1999. The National Plan of Action for Women establishes a set of priority actions pertaining to different areas including health and population **which** have direct bearing on women empowerment.

Pakistan has also constituted an Inquiry Commission to review discriminatory legislation. The report of the Commission has been **finalized**. We hope that the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Women and the recommendations of the Inquiry Commission shall have far reaching effect on women empowerment.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We know that implementation of ICPD Plan of Action is multi-dimensional and **all cannot** be done in the public sector alone. This explains the active **role of** civil society including **NGOs** in all areas of social development in Pakistan. Post-ICPD, the **NGOs** operating in the field of reproductive health and **family planning** has grown in number **from** 121 in 1994 to 171 in 1998. The scope of operation of **NGOs** has also expanded. We have also forged **successful** partnerships with the private sector in providing reproductive health and family planning services.

You would all agree that the **ICPD-POA** is a tall order since it covers a wide range of new areas. The full implementation of ICPD agenda requires such amount of resources that are beyond the capacity of developing countries including Pakistan, In 1994, all nations had agreed that greater financial allocation was needed **from** both the donor and recipient countries. However, on a worldwide basis, the international community has seriously lagged behind its funding commitments made at the ICPD as has only two days ago been brought before the meeting of the Commission on Populations and Development. Despite its resource **constraints**, Pakistan has **increased** its public investment in health and family planning sectors manifold. In addition, substantial investments are being made by the private sector. The donor assistance has neither matched our requirements nor their commitments at the Cairo Conference in 1994.

It will be **difficult** for Pakistan to maintain the required pace of effort because of its weak economic conditions. It is feared that the resource crunch would remain a drag on Pakistan's progress towards its cherished goals of socio-economic development and demographic transition. It would be unfortunate **if the** breakthroughs in the recent reproductive health changes are allowed to fall back mainly due to the resource **constraints**. A **substantial** increase in donor support is, therefore, imperative to sustain Pakistan's **efforts in implementing** the ICPD agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite our financial constraints, Pakistan pledges not only to maintain the momentum of its progress but also to accelerate it. There are reasons to be hopeful. Now, both the government and the civil society have a clearer grasp of the tasks ahead and a stronger **will** to address these. The most immediate challenge is to meet the unmet demand for reproductive health and family planning services. **If only** half the demand is met over the next five years, the achievement would yield enormous dividends. Further reduction in maternal mortality and infant and child mortality remains our highest priority. Another challenge is to enable the nation's youth in making the transition to adulthood through improved 'education and employment opportunities. Efforts to empower women to reduce gender inequities in education and employment and the reduction of poverty form the core of the **future** plan of action of Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman,

Our success or **failure** will depend ultimately on our ability to operate in an unfavorable environment because of the severe resource constraints. We are optimistic that the donors and the international community would stand by us in these **difficult** times.

We recognize the importance of **PrepCom** as it would not only review progress made in implementing the ICPD POA but also complete preparatory work for the Special Session of the General Assembly this year. Allow me, Mr. Chairman to assure you that the Pakistan delegation would extend its fullest cooperation in making **PrepCom** a success.

I thank you, Mr. chairman.