

As delivered

Address

by

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to the

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POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT***

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for inviting me to address this important session of the Commission. Following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development the former Population Commission has taken on a new and revitalized role. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the positive changes. The membership of the Commission on Population and Development has increased from 20 to 47, and its responsibilities now include assisting the Economic and Social Council in monitoring, reviewing and assessing the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. A welcome innovation that you introduced was the decision to establish themes for each session; and the theme for the 32nd session is population growth, structure and distribution. And perhaps for the future, we need to take into account what the Commission is doing, as has been suggested by Mr. Desai. I would like to note with appreciation how many parts of the United Nations have strengthened their work in population, and I want to thank Mr. Desai and Mr. Chamie.

In line with the reforms proposed by the Secretary General, the Commissions of ECOSOC have taken an active role in monitoring the outcomes of the international conferences of this decade, reviewing progress and exchanging information. As Secretary-general of the ICPD I have addressed the Commission on Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. Later this week the preparatory committee for the special session on ICPD+5 will be addressed by the presidents of both these Commissions. I also participated in the inter-sessional meeting in Malaysia of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development, and here I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dr. Raj Karim for the excellent meeting and wonderful hospitality. Increased interaction between CPD and the Commissions concerned with the outcomes of other conferences will ensure integrated responses overall to development challenges; and Mr. Desai has elaborated this very well.

UNFPA has emphasized broad cooperation with the functional commissions and other United Nations co-ordinating bodies. In implementing the ICPD Programme of Action, we have also looked for partnership with other United Nations agencies and programmes, parliamentarians, NGOs, the private sector and other members of civil society. Last year many of these partners joined UNFPA in a series of roundtable meetings and technical symposia which were hosted by governments.

One of these events was the Technical Symposium on International Migration. An outcome of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, the symposium was held at the direct instigation of the Commission on Population and Development. It contributed to a better understanding of the migration process and provided new insights into the complex area of international migration and development. In planning this event, UNFPA was especially grateful for the suggestions and guidance of the Commission at its 30th session. We shall report on the outcomes of the Symposium in more detail during this session.

This and other meetings discussed progress and issues in the implementation of the Programme of Action and helped set the stage for the five-year review of progress towards the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, or ICPD+5, a major preoccupation of UNFPA in 1998. Last month at the international forum – organized by UNFPA in The Hague and graciously and generously hosted by the Netherlands Government – delegates from 177 countries exchanged views, reported progress and discussed obstacles to implementing the Programme of Action.

These discussions confirmed that countries are committed to reach the goals of the Programme of Action. They were reinforced by UNFPA's operational review, which showed how much progress has been made by countries since ICPD towards devising responsive population policies and crafting new approaches to population issues.

Turning to operational matters, reproductive health has remained the primary focus of UNFPA's programme, accounting for over 60 per cent of total programme allocations. A major concern has been to develop effective programmes, promoting reproductive and sexual health within a human rights framework;

In this area our priorities are:

- first, to stimulate efforts to combat the spread of HIV infections. UNFPA supported HIV/AIDS prevention activities in over 132 countries as part of the special UN programme. The Fund's support continues in line with national HIV/AIDS policies and programmes, and within the global strategy of UNAIDS.
- secondly, to encourage programmes to protect the reproductive health of adolescents, in accordance with national circumstances, human rights norms and fundamental ethical values;
- third, we have increased our attention to the problem of high maternal mortality. We are redoubling our efforts in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and international NGOs to ensure that high-quality services, including family planning information and services, are available and accessible to all who need them, especially high-risk groups such as the urban and rural poor; the youngest mothers; and women whose access to services is constrained by family attitudes or local custom;
- next I would like to mention efforts to improve reproductive health services for refugees and women displaced by civil conflict. UNFPA has developed close operational links with UNHCR, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and our partnerships with many other NGOs have made significant contributions to the reproductive health of this most vulnerable group of women. Since there has been some confusion about emergency contraception I would like to point out that the so-called "morning after pill" provided to women in need is no more or less than the familiar low-dose oral contraceptive. Medical authorities including WHO agree that it is a true contraceptive, not an abortifacient;
- our final reproductive health priority is to minimize, to reduce the dependence and recourse to abortion, by making, safe, effective, appropriate family planning information and services available to all who need them, and to create the enabling environment to enable women and couples who need these services to use them. We continue to encourage countries to look squarely at the issue of unsafe abortion both as a personal tragedy and a threat to public health, and to find ways to combat it.

Gender concerns are a cross-cutting dimension of all UNFPA-supported programmes. To this end, we have emphasized gender issues in all our work, promoting women's empowerment and gender equity and equality in all aspects of our programmes. We have strengthened the gender aspects in all UNFPA's policies and programmes and will continue to make this a prime concern.

Turning to other substantive areas, reliable, regular and timely data are essential to shape effective policies and to assess programme implementation. In common with many donors, UNFPA uses the ICPD goals as indicators as a basis for resource allocations. But in many important areas, for example the access to reproductive health programmes or maternal mortality, the data are not reliable or are lacking altogether. To help meet the need for data, UNFPA is providing, among other things, extensive support to countries for the year 2000 round of censuses: but more attention and resources are required to improve the information by which progress towards ICPD goals can be measured. This applies most especially to the poorest nations and to countries with economies in transition, which have not yet developed effective systems for collecting, analysing and disseminating relevant data.

In seeking for maximum effect in allocation of resources for international assistance, donors should not overlook the need to support the everyday essential activities such as collecting basic data and establishing systems to monitor programme effectiveness. This is generally considered low priority, but it is imperative that we help all countries to meet these goals. Without these basic tools, we cannot show progress towards ICPD goals nor identify areas which need attention.

There is also a need for additional research on emerging issues as social policy in aging societies, the social effects of economic policy, and on migration. In order for the United Nations system to lead the international discussion, we must stimulate research and see that its results are both widely discussed and form the basis for policy. And, indeed, the United Nations must be at the cutting edge of research.

Your work here is most valuable in itself, but it also forms the prelude to the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly at the end of June. Your discussions in the next two days therefore have a dual value. They will show the direction in which the CPD is moving; but they will also be essential for a successful outcome of the PrepComm, and subsequently of the Special Session. I wish you great success, and I hope that UNFPA will participate fully in your discussions.

Thank you.