



INDIA भारत

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STATEMENT

BY

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AND
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on

Agenda Item 4:
General Debate on National Experience in Population Matters:
The Changing Age Structures of Populations and
Their Implications for Development

40th Session of the
UN Commission on Population and Development

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Mr. Chairman,

We congratulate you and members of the Bureau of the 40th Session of the Commission on Population and Development and assure you of India's cooperation. We thank the Secretary-General for the useful reports prepared for the 40th Session of this Commission and thank Mr. Ocampo, Ms. Obaid, Ms. Zlotnik and others for the excellent presentation of reports. We broadly associate ourselves with the statement made by the Chair of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairman,

The deliberations of this Session of the CPD come at an opportune time. The theme "Changing age structures of populations and their implications for development" draws our attention to the opportunities and challenges presented by the demographic changes taking place in our times. These changes present a 'demographic bonus or dividend' and a 'demographic window of opportunity' to many of our countries by providing us with the creative energy of our youth for the betterment of our economies. Simultaneously, the theme reminds us of the needs of our aging populations. These demographic trends have implications for development.

The report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2007/4) highlights that the current demographic situation is unique in that it encompasses both the largest population of young peoples and the largest population of persons aged 60 years and over. The demographic transition is taking place at a much faster pace in developing countries, which have much less time to adjust to their growing elderly population. There is need for a gender sensitive approach, as women comprise the greater number and proportion of older persons in almost all societies.

The challenge for developing countries is to find sufficient resources to address the urgent development priorities associated with the growing population of youth, while at the same time providing the necessary support for older persons. In developed countries, the main concern arises from the need to replace workers, ensure the sustainability of pension systems, strengthen support systems and devise creative approaches to ensure the well-being and social services for older persons. International migration of young people from the developing world is often seen as a possible solution for the developed world's efforts in dealing with their ageing populations.

Mr. Chairman,

By all accounts, India is said to be on the cusp of a demographic dividend. Today's India is characterised by a large population of young

people. Approximately half of our country's population is less than 25 years old and two-thirds is under the age of 35 years. Based on current trends, some projections for the future indicate that as much as 86% of the total growth in India's population between the years 2000 and 2025 would be in the ages of 15-64 years. By 2020, the growth rate of the working age population is expected to exceed the growth rate of the total population. Till 2050 India will have the advantage of the demographic dividend: the continuing entry of youth into the labour market in the context of expansion of manufacturing and hence employment would increase the savings rate and maintain very high growth rates. Above all, the energy and vibrancy of youth, the fact that their reach exceeds their grasp, their capacity for risk taking and innovative ideas gives the cutting edge to India's economy, science and technology.

The Government of India is preparing the country for these far-reaching changes. The year 2007-08 will mark the beginning of India's 11th Plan, whose declared objective is "Faster and More Inclusive Growth". The Government intends to raise public spending on education, collectively at the federal and state levels, to at least 6% of the GDP in a phased manner, with half of this amount spent on primary and secondary education. A National Commission on Education would be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes. The budget presented to our Parliament over a month ago enhances the allocation for education by 34.2% and for health and family welfare by 21.9%. The allocations for the "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" or 'education for all' and the "Mid-day Meal Scheme" have been enhanced. Teachers training institutions would be strengthened. There are plans to appoint 200,000 more teachers and construct 500,000 more classrooms. Employment generation in rural and urban areas through several employment generating schemes, is another priority.

Mr. Chairman,

The Madrid International Plan of Action has played an important role in addressing the situation of the elderly at national and international levels. The work of UN agencies as well as civil society in providing support to the efforts of governments in caring for ageing populations is extremely important. India has initiated a number of measures for the welfare of aged people, including the establishment of a National Council for Older People. The National Policy for Older Persons is devoted to the well-being of the elderly, to strengthen their legitimate place in society and help them live their life with purpose, dignity and peace. India is committed to work with the international community to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

The reports of the Secretary-General provide us with information on the activities or programmes of UNFPA in assisting developing countries in addressing these challenges. We believe that other UN development agencies also need to bear in mind the demographic factor in devising their programmes. The UNFPA 'Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth' could benefit from expanding the scope and breadth of programmes to help developing countries reap the benefits of the demographic dividend. This would entail a greater focus on education, health, employment generation and poverty reduction and development. Focus by more than one development agency on this issue would not imply "wasteful duplication".

Mr. Chairman,

The need for enhanced resources to enable the UN system to effectively assist developing countries in these areas has been emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report (E/CN.2007/5). It states that even with the surpassing of targets, the amount mobilized would be significantly below actual needs, which have escalated considerably since the ICPD and which now include treatment for HIV/AIDS. For many less developed countries that cannot generate sufficient resources, the lack of adequate funding remains the chief constraint to the full implementation of the Programme of Action and on attaining the goals of the Conference agenda. Even as the increased resources still do not meet current HIV/AIDS needs, it is worrisome that funding for family planning has been steadily decreasing and is below the suggested target of US \$11.5 billion in 2005 and is not meeting current needs. The statistics presented by Ms. Obaid yesterday are even more alarming, particularly that donor assistance for family planning as a percentage of all population assistance has decreased from 55 percent in 1995 to 9 percent in 2004 and that if not reversed, the trend towards less funding for family planning could undermine efforts to achieve the MDGs, especially MDG 5 on maternal health. India was among the first countries in the world to have a Population Policy as far back as 1951. Women's health and freedom were important features especially since the 1960s (more than three decades before the Cairo Conference). At that time, the developed world, in a curious replay of eugenics wanted to put down birth rates in developing countries. In India we did not ignore women's freedom and reproductive health nor the future need of the economy for the skills, vision and energy of youth.

Mr. Chairman,

The theme of this CPD reminds us of the challenges that the demographic trends of our times present. It is for us to convert these

challenges into opportunities. In an increasingly globalising world, investments in today's youth, whether by developing or developed countries, are investments in the common future of humankind.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
