



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
315 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y.10016

Statement by the Cuban delegation at the 44 Session of the Commission on Population and Development, under agenda item 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: fertility, reproductive health and development.

Mr. Chairman,

In the framework of the 44th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, it is an honor for my country to report about our efforts to implement the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, particularly in relation to "Fertility, reproductive health and development", which is the main theme of this session.

Cuba has developed integrated and prioritized strategies and policies in the public health and education sectors, even during the most difficult economic situation and amidst an unjust blockade lasting over 50 years, which is the main obstacle to our country's development. Sexual and reproductive health services have been developed nationwide, are free of charge, and of universal access, which contributes to our country's efforts to attain the millennium goals and objectives.

Our pillars have been the promotion of comprehensive education and health care programs, as well as minimum and stable social security and welfare for all, on the basis of the principle of universal access to health care and the elimination of inequalities.

The strategies developed are based on the full right of individuals to family planning and reproductive health, as well as on a comprehensive program on sexual and reproductive education, which is widely promoted at the national and local levels through the mass media.

The contraceptive prevalence rate shows that Cuba holds the highest contraceptive coverage in Latin America and the Caribbean, and it is among the first 30 countries worldwide with the highest coverage.

According to studies conducted by the Ministry of Public Health, the estimated percentage of effective contraceptive prevalence compared with the total was 77.1% in 2007; the average contraceptive prevalence in the last 10 years was 74.3%; and the estimate in 2008 was 77.6%. This indicator makes Cuba the third country with the highest contraceptive coverage in the American continent, which has steadily surpassed 75.4% of effective contraceptive coverage and can reach 80% by 2015.

Global economic and financial crises and the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba have a negative impact on the opportunities for further development in this field. Limited financial resources are an obstacle to improving the quality of contraceptive commodities and updating technologies so as to better address preconception risks, and the quality of gynecological-obstetric services in general.

However, national efforts are made in order to improve the quality in the care for pregnant women, with a comprehensive approach, by increasing the responsibility of and being more demanding with the human resources involved in each stage of the process – pregnancy, labor and puerperium-; having better organization and higher effectiveness of the entire specialized infrastructure available –from primary to secondary health care-; closely monitoring and timely assessing complications during pregnancy, and analyzing the effectiveness of measures taken.

Adolescent fertility has dropped by 35% between 1990 and 2008. The specific fertility rate per 1,000 women aged 15-19 decreased from 77.5 to 49.2 per 1,000 in 2008.

Prenatal care coverage averaged 14.5 visits per childbirth in 2008. This indicator is high and it is almost the same nationwide. It is duly calculated based on risks, including prenatal diagnosis for congenital malformations. Maternity health level, measured as deaths per 100,000 live births, is one of the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean; and the Cuban mother and child program meets all the requirements proposed by international agencies on women health care.

Cuba shows unquestionable achievements in the promotion of gender equality. There are sustained and indisputable accomplishments on the participation and integration of women in all aspects of the economic, political and social life of the country, which are the result from inclusive policies and the expressed political will of the Cuban Government. This contributes to enhancing women's independence and their understanding of their sexual and reproductive rights.

These rights, including the right to abortion and the free and responsible choice over their fertility, are guaranteed and are part of the free universal healthcare services. We have the necessary and specialized services for family planning, which is important to achieve gender equality.

Actions are taken to eradicate still existing sexist stereotypes and cultural limitations, particularly at the family level, taking into account realities, conditions and set goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Since 2001, our country has designed five-year Strategic Plans on HIV Prevention and Control, based on multi-sectoral strategies including the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which was adopted at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly about HIV/AIDS in 2001.

The attention to people with HIV/AIDS starts from the general principle at the center of the National Healthcare System of our country: universal and free of charge access. High priority has been given to strengthening the National Prevention and Control Program, by means of its technical re-organization at all levels, with a gender approach from a sociocultural point of view.

The national protocol to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmissions includes: access to HIV testing, comprehensive care, more than 11 prenatal visits, immunological monitoring, antiretroviral therapy to the mother and child according to national standards, elective cesarean at 39 weeks, and bottle feeding. There are protocols on clinical and laboratory follow-up on the child until 18 months old.

There is an Epidemiological Surveillance System for Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STD) since the 70's, and Programs to prevent and control syphilis, congenital syphilis and gonorrhoea have been systematically reviewed and updated, in accordance with international standards for addressing these infectious diseases.

Persons with HIV have the right to use all healthcare services, regardless of the complexity level. Also, the system ensures that these people have universal and free of charge access to antiretroviral therapy, prophylaxis or treatment of opportunistic diseases and their complications, to diagnostic and monitoring tests (including CD4 counts and viral loads), as well as psychological and social care.

Mr. Chairman,

Regrettably, the field of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control and national efforts thereon do not escape the unjust US blockade policy against Cuba. Early this year, the US Government seized 4.207 million dollars from the funding of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria destined to three cooperation projects with our country, aimed at combating the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and tuberculosis.

This hostile act of the US Government constitutes an illegal action seriously hindering the multilateral international cooperation offered by United Nations international agencies and system through its agencies, funds and programs. It is even worse for it affects funds targeted at combating and preventing pandemics in Cuba, to the eradication of which Cuba and the international community devote their efforts, as part of the implementation of one of the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite all obstacles, the Cuban Government makes huge efforts to guarantee and maintain a healthcare system of excellence.

I thank you