



PAKISTAN

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Statement

by

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at the

**Forty-fifth session of
Commission on Population and Development**

New York, 25 April 2012

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to congratulate you and other Members of the Bureau on their election. We assure you of our full cooperation during the proceedings of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman, it is a matter of honor for Pakistan to have served on this Commission's bureau last year representing the Asia-Pacific region.

We would also like to thank the Secretary General for the reports submitted to the Commission for helping discussions on this year's priority theme "Adolescents and Youth".

Mr. Chairman,

We take this opportunity to appreciate the role of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Our long-standing partnership with UNFPA dates back to 1971 since then we have with the financial and technical support of UNFPA implemented seven country programmes.

We also acknowledge the role played by Pakistan's vibrant Civil Society organizations in advocacy and programme planning related to population welfare.

Mr. Chairman,

With a Population of 180 million, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. An estimated 104 million Pakistanis are below the age of 30 and about 35 percent of the population is below 15 years of age. As a result Pakistan is among the countries that have a direct stake in discussions and programme interventions related to population and development. Our youth bulge carries both challenges and opportunities, historically, demographic transition like that of Pakistan provide unique opportunities for reaping the demographic dividend to progress economically, it is however also inter alia accompanied by challenges of providing education, imparting technical training to the youth besides job creation and health facilities.

Mr. Chairman,

There is lack of definitional clarity in terms of the exact age-group that we are addressing in this year's theme "adolescents and youth". This is because of diverse cultural, national and religious contexts that we all come from. However, despite the lack of clarity in terms of exact age, we all have a fair understanding of the average age group that we are intending to address in our theme. Adolescents and youth is an age group which has its own sensitivities and requirements and while respecting individual's rights, society, family and parents in particular have a special responsibility in helping them to

successfully sail through this age group to become responsible members of society and architects of our future. Indeed traditional family is the basic unit on which any society rests.

We have seen that the debate on population and development is many a time portrayed as a fight between two mindsets. The debate on whether to take a more rights based approach or to have development based approach of population issues has caused the focus to be taken away addressing the main challenges. Similarly sensitivity of different cultures and religions should also be given due consideration while addressing population issues. Not till we are able to build bridges among ourselves, we will not be able to address the population challenges of our world of over 7 billion inhabitants. A related issue is the missing voice in policy formulation within the relevant UN entities in particular the UNFPA from developing countries including Pakistan. We believe that a balanced representation from these countries in the relevant organizations will positively contribute to policy formulation and programme planning and to comprehend the context of cultural and religious sensitivities shaping the debate on population issues in some of most populous developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

In the context of this year's theme, there are several steps that have already been taken by the Government of Pakistan to address adolescents and youth segment of our population, these include:

- Establishment of help lines for providing information and counseling to young people on their sexual and reproductive health concerns, queries and related issues.
- Incorporation of Population and Health related contents in school text books. Teachers have been trained to counsel school children. Ministry of Education has included Life Skill based Education in National Education Policy while Ministry of Labor has also launched project to address Reproductive Health issues of young workers in industrial establishments.
- A range of legislative and administrative measures with regard to protecting the rights of women in particular the recent legislations against acid crimes, anti-women practices, harassment of women at workplace, and domestic violence.
- The Anti-Women Practices Act 2011 also deals with forced marriage which is a criminal offence and perpetrators are awarded imprisonment and substantial fines.

- The National Assembly of Pakistan has adopted a resolution on maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Revamping of National Trust for Population Welfare (NATPOW) for providing support to civil society organizations interested in promoting family planning and reproductive health services.

Mr. Chairman,

Our former Prime Minister Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto had in her statement at Cairo in 1994, said that '*I dream of a Pakistan, of an Asia, of a world, where every pregnancy is planned, and every child conceived is nurtured, loved, educated and supported*', this is a vision held by the Government of Pakistan. The Population Welfare Program in Pakistan has now been devolved from the Federation to the Provinces, with the aim of improving the functioning of the Program by enhancing its managerial efficiency and bringing it in accordance with regional and local needs of the communities. We hope this step will further help to realize Mohtarma's vision.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to highlight the following aspects based on Pakistan's experience in interventions related to adolescents and youth:

- There is a need for concerted and continued focus on family planning and provision of quality comprehensive reproductive health care backed with follow up.
- Eradication of poverty and the need to build better primary health care system are important in achieving the MDGs.
- A global partnership as envisioned in ICPD requiring increased development assistance.
- There is a need to promote research and development, knowledge-sharing and provision of information technology for equitable access to health care services and medicines by all, especially in the developing countries

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.
