



Check against Delivery

**Statement
by
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**ECOSOC
High Level Segment**

***Reducing Poverty in
The Poorest Countries***

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Madam President,
Distinguished delegates,

I am very happy to be able to join this important debate representing UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. I would like to make four key points.

First, let me reiterate what many of you have said and what our Secretary-General outlined in his report: mobilizing resources – international and domestic – and creating an enabling environment to reduce poverty in the LDCs, has to be the heart of our work.

It is the heart of our work because we will not live up to the goals and principles laid out in the Millennium Declaration, unless we ensure poverty reduction in the LDCs and for the most vulnerable.

And it is the heart of our work *now*. As we approach the five-year review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, it is clear that we have reached a critical juncture. As Mark Malloch Brown stated recently, 2005 may well prove to be a turning point for development.

Second, I would like to reiterate the commitment of UNFPA, as an individual agency, a member of UNDG and as a partner to other organizations, to achieving the vision of the Millennium Declaration and the Brussels Plan of Action.

- ? The allocation of our own limited resources heavily prioritizes LDCs.
- ? Our work within the UN Development Group to enhance the effectiveness of our collective efforts is making a difference – higher quality analysis, more strategic programming through UNDAF, increasingly harmonized and simplified procedures to reduce the burden on national partners, and better alignment with national processes, including the PRSP.

As a system, we have to make better use of the resources available, and that includes achieving a sharper focus, better organizational competence and accountability, and drawing on our knowledge-base. And as a global community as whole we have to measure up to our commitments in Monterrey, Brussels and other fora including the G8 to make additional resources available.

Thirdly, I would like to stress some key issues that must be at the heart of our response to poverty reduction. There are **unprecedented population and demographic challenges** facing least developed countries that must be addressed in a comprehensive manner to reduce poverty, including:

- ? **Civil conflict and population displacement.**
- ? **International migration and brain drain, with an acute shortage of skilled health workers.**
- ? **Rapid population growth.**
- ? **Large youth populations, and**
- ? **HIV/AIDS.**

Let me very briefly focus on three of these key challenges.

First, rapid population growth. With population growth rates 8 times higher than those in industrial nations, population is expected to reach 942 million people, an increase of 220 million, by 2015. This growth is one of the factors causing environmental degradation and reduced cropland per person, key issues in agricultural economies and for people living at the subsistence level.

Second, the LDCs also have **large youth populations.** In the least developed countries, half of the population is below the age of 18. The point I want to stress is that the current bulge in the youth population presents a vital opportunity for growth and transformation if there is a concerted, massive investment in education, health care and livelihood training. It also presents an alarming threat of potential social unrest and conflict if we remain passive or limited in our response.

And the third issue is the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. Scaled up efforts and investments are needed to fight HIV/AIDS in the poorest countries. They cannot do it alone, although their leadership and commitment is absolutely critical. One of the most effective entry points for HIV prevention and treatment is the reproductive health service delivery points including maternal health and family planning clinics that have been established over the past four decades. This is especially important for reaching women, who we know are especially vulnerable.

My fourth, and concluding key point relates to the results of UNFPA's Global Survey measuring progress during this 10th anniversary year of the International Conference on Population and Development.

The survey shows that the vast majority of countries have put in place a policy and legal framework for population and development, reproductive health and rights, and gender equality. Progress is being made.

I think that this can be said of the global environment as a whole. Progress is being made. We have the policies, goals and general consensus in place to make a difference. But we are far from implementing our statements and aspirations.

Our challenge and opportunity is to build on this solid foundation. Let us focus our efforts to ensure that poverty-fighting investments—in education and health, including sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality are made a priority in the least developed countries. Let us deliver on our commitments and let us ensure that we invest in people, especially women and youth. They are the heart of our successful future.

Thank you.