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Commission for Social Development

Statement of UNFPA

on

Social Integration

5 February 2010

New York

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

This year, the international community will observe the tenth anniversary of the Millennium Declaration which calls for a global partnership to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. To achieve the MDGs and to advance social development, we must have societies in which all individuals, regardless of their race, gender, language, culture or religion, are free to exercise their rights and responsibilities on an equal basis. Social exclusion, discrimination and intolerance have no place in a peaceful and just society.

The World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, commemorating its fifteenth anniversary, identified the objective of social integration as creating “a society for all”. The 1994 International Conference on Population Development at Cairo also placed individual human beings at the very heart of development.

Social integration means the ability to fully participate in, and contribute to, the social, cultural, political and economic life in society. It means equal access and opportunities for all. In this regard, social integration policies should seek to reduce gender inequality, and promote access to basic social services for all, especially education and health care, including reproductive health. This can be accomplished with the participation of social groups such as youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and people living with HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Chairman, to reduce poverty it is critical to empower women and girls as equal members of their societies so they can fully contribute to the wealth, development, and stability of their communities. Fifteen years ago Cairo was one of the first international forums to acknowledge the fundamental role of women in development.

While social transfers can contribute to the alleviation of poverty, sustainable poverty reduction requires raising household incomes and the availability of jobs. Countries will need to pursue job creation policies as part of their economic recovery from the financial crisis. Sustainable reduction of poverty also urgently requires a fight against discrimination and inequity. As we join together this year to review the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals it is time to tilt the scale towards

poverty eradication, decent work for all and social integration. These priorities must continue to guide our way forward.

Mr. Chairman, our motto at UNFPA is everyone counts. We are guided in our work by the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development which puts people at the center of development. Towards this end, UNFPA promotes gender equality, the empowerment of women and universal access to reproductive health. UNFPA advocates for increased investment in the largest youth generation in history – in young people’s health, education and skills development, and for allowing girls to remain in school and marry later so that they can reach their full potential.

Mr. Chairman, a particularly vulnerable group that is often affected by the lack of social integration is the elderly. Many of them are poor. Some are sick and frail and depend on others to assist them in daily tasks. And, of course, many of them are women, posing a triple jeopardy of gender, old age and poverty. UNFPA promotes a society for all ages and the full participation of older persons in community life, the full realization of their human rights including elimination of discrimination, violence and abuse.

To ensure the social integration of all groups in society, we need inclusive policies to address poverty and provide social services and opportunities. To achieve these goals we need conclusive evidence based on solid data. For this UNFPA supports countries with the collection and analysis of data, which is especially important during the 2010 round of censuses to help governments formulate appropriate policies to achieve development goals.

In the days and months ahead we look forward to working in close collaboration with all of you and other stakeholders to move forward the agenda of social integration and ensure a society in which all individuals enjoy a better quality of life.

Thank you.