



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. SULTAN AL-MAHMOUD, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S FIFTY-NINTH SESSION, ON AGENDA ITEM 45: INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOMES OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS: COMMEMORATION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (New York, 14 October 2004)

Mr. President,

Issues of population encompass the most basic concerns of human existence. It is the birth, death and migration of individuals that form the essential components of demographic dynamics. For whole societies, these basic events produce rates of population increase or decrease, and form the age structure of population and the geographic pattern of human settlements. These patterns have their influence on the social, economic, political and environmental issues that are central to the realization of the goal of sustainable development.

To address these concerns in a comprehensive manner, the world convened an International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994. The Conference adopted a Programme of Action which addresses the full range of population issues as they relate to economic and social development. The POA identified qualitative and quantitative goals in a number of key areas, including universal access to the knowledge and means for achieving reproductive health; goals regarding education, especially for girls; gender equity and equality; mortality and health, stressing infant, child and maternal mortality; and combating the emerging epidemic of HIV and AIDS. Above all, the POA emphasized the need for resources that would be required to meet the goals.

The POA is not just a set of goals. It lays forth a road map of practical policy and programmatic actions, the ways to reach each goal with specified time-bound targets. After ten years, there is a need to review the progress made so far and identify the areas that require further work.

The world population reached 6.4 billion persons in 2004. The current average annual growth rate of population is 1.3 percent, significantly lower than the rate of 1.7 percent in the period for 1975 to 1990. However, in less developed countries the rate is higher than average at 1.6 percent. Although there has been significant gain in universal reduction of fertility, the progress is uneven.

While 100 out of 192 countries have met the POA goal of a life expectancy at birth greater than 70 years in 2000-2005, 36 countries, mainly in Africa, remain with life expectancies at birth lower than 50 years. Progress is by no means uniform, as many countries have witnessed a stagnation of mortality improvement if not a decline in life expectancy. The causes are related to socio-economic transformations, the re-emergence of diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and cholera, and the impact of HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to expand throughout the world, erasing decades of social and economic progress and having a devastating impact on population in terms of increased morbidity and mortality. For some countries, the demographic impact of AIDS is enormous. This has serious consequences for their development prospects, as they are losing their productive human resources.

Mr. President,

Since the ICDP in 1994, migration has become a major issue of concern for the international community. As of mid 2000, approximately 175 million persons resided in countries other than where they were born. The POA accorded particular importance to the basic rights of migrants. The POA encouraged more cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination in order to maximize the benefits of international migration. Unfortunately, recent developments to curb immigration have also included violations of the basic rights of migrants.

In this respect, the programme of action, adopted at Cairo the International Conference on Population and Development stipulates in para 10-29, the following:

"The problems of refugees and displaced persons arising from forced migration, including their right to repatriation, should be settled in accordance with the relevant principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other international instruments and relevant United Nations resolutions".

The Group of 77 would like to call for a comprehensive arrangement to address all aspects of the issue of international migration. The Group looks forward to the High Level Dialogue on this issue in 2006 and hopes that it would help in forging greater global consensus on issue pertaining to international migration and protecting the rights of all migrants.

Mr. President,

In the key areas of reproductive health, many countries have established reproductive health programmes, including family planning, expanded access to them and improved their quality. Nevertheless, millions still lack access to the means of achieving reproductive health.

The POA also called for an increased national capacity to enhance primary health care and maternal and child health delivery networks. Many countries have made progress in this regard but the pace is slow and there is a need to give new impetus.

Infant and child mortality rates have improved but 62 developing countries, accounting for 35 percent of the world population will not meet the goal of an infant mortality rate between 50 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2000-2005. There are still gaps in the implementation of the POA with dire implications for the realization of the development goals, particularly the MDGs.

The Programme of Action recommended time-bound targets on resource mobilization - 17 billion dollars by the year 2000 and 18.5 billion by 2005. Despite a steady but slow increase in resources for population in the last 10 years, the target of mobilizing 17 billion was not met. Similarly, attaining the target of 18.5 by 2005 remains a challenge for the entire world.

Resource gaps are especially large in poor countries, and the least developed countries entirely depend on ODA. Unless new, additional and sustained resources are provided to developing countries, it is unlikely that most of the goals and targets of the POA will be met. Instead, there will be a worsening of the population and reproductive health situation in many poor countries. The need to reach the internationally agreed target of 0.7 percent of GDP for ODA and to fulfill the commitments made at Monterrey is most urgent.

The group believes that this year's review should lead to a renewed commitment to the goals of the POA. This issue should also receive high priority at the 2005 High Level event to be held next year, as the MDGs cannot be achieved without the full implementation of the conference goals.

The members of the Group remain committed to these goals and will make every effort to achieve these objectives on time. We hope the international community extend its full support in their endeavours to achieve these goals.

Thank your, Mr. President.