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AS WRITTEN

SPEECH BY H.E. PRINCE MBILINI, PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF
 SWAZILAND, MADE ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT, CAIRO, EGYPT, 5
 SEPTEMBER, 1994.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT, HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT

MUBARAK

YOUR EXCELLENCY, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNFPA AND SECRETARY-

GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN

YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY

YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

YOUR EXCELLENCIES HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

LADIES AND GENTLEMAN

ON BEHALF OF MY FELLOW AFRICAN COLLEAGUES, IT IS MY SINGULAR HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO CONGRATULATE YOU, YOUR EXCELLENCY, ON YOUR ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF THIS AUGUST ASSEMBLY. WE ARE CONFIDENT, MR PRESIDENT, THAT THROUGH YOUR WISE AND ABLE LEADERSHIP, THE DELIBERATIONS OF THIS CONFERENCE WILL NOT ONLY BE FRUITFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE BUT THEY WILL ALSO RESULT IN MOMENTOUS DECISIONS WHICH WILL GUIDE OUR ACTIONS IN THE YEARS TO COME SO AS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR COUNTRIES AND REGIONS.

I AM PARTICULARLY HONORED, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND HAS BEEN ENABLED TO SPEAK AT THIS OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY. WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE AT SUCH AN IMPORTANT OCCASION.

AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME WHEN IMPORTANT DECISIONS AFFECTING PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ARE BEING TAKEN, WE WOULD LIKE TO

EXTEND A SINCERE WORD OF WELCOME TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA. THEIR REJOINING OUR WORLD COMMUNITY GIVES US HOPE FOR THE FUTURE PROSPERITY AND TRANQUILLITY OF MANKIND AND PROVIDES US WITH A SATISFACTORY LESSON REGARDING PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE MANY PROBLEMS WHICH CONFRONT AFRICA.

THE SUBJECT OF THIS CONFERENCE HAS RAISED A LOT OF CONTROVERSIES AND DISQUIET IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD. VARIOUS ALLEGATIONS, QUITE FREQUENTLY BASED ON MISINFORMATION OR A DESIRE TO MISINFORM, HAVE BEEN MADE WITH REGARD TO THE CENTRAL ISSUES WHICH WE ARE EXPECTED TO DELIBERATE UPON AND TAKE CONCRETE DECISIONS. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH CONTROVERSIES HAVE SUCCEEDED TO CLARIFY THE MAJOR POPULATION ISSUES UNDERPINNING THE SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION. THE KEY ISSUES ENSHRINED IN THE PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION COVER A NUMBER OF AREAS WHICH AFFECT AFRICA DIRECTLY. THESE INCLUDE THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WHICH INCLUDES FAMILY PLANNING, REDUCTION OF INFANT AND MATERNAL MORTALITY, PROMOTION OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF MEN AND WOMEN IN RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD, AND RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF SOVEREIGN STATES TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND MODALITIES FOR DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR LEGAL CODES, CULTURE, MORAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES AND DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES ADOPTED. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS FLEXIBILITY IS EXTREMELY CRUCIAL AND SHOULD HELP FACILITATE THE SPEEDY ADOPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF ACTION. THE SAID PROGRAMME OF ACTION, IN OUR VIEW, PROVIDES GENERAL PRINCIPLES WHICH WILL ENABLE EACH ONE OF US TO MAKE PROGRESS IN THE ENDEAVOR TO MEET OUR NATIONS' ASPIRATIONS FOR IMPROVED AND SUSTAINED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

THE AFRICAN CONTINENT FACES EXTREMELY SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT. IT IS OUR SINCERE BELIEF THAT POPULATION GROWTH PLAYS A VERY CRITICAL ROLE IN THE CONTINUED UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF OUR CONTINENT. WE, THEREFORE, CANNOT BE INDIFFERENT WHEN THESE ISSUES ARE BEING DISCUSSED. AFRICA HAS

THE HIGHEST POPULATION AND FERTILITY GROWTH RATES, THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF POVERTY, THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF INFANT AND MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES AND THIS IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF HIV/AIDS INFECTIONS.

A LARGE NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE CURRENTLY UNDERGOING THE PAINFUL EXERCISE OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT WITH A VIEW TO CORRECTING ECONOMIC IMBALANCES which have>CREPT UP OVER YEARS. THE RAPIDLY EXPANDING POPULATIONS IN OUR CONTINENT, SWAZILAND INCLUDED, ARE NOT FACILITATING THIS PROCESS; INSTEAD THEY COMPLICATE IT FURTHER. THIS IS ESPECIALLY FELT BY THE VULNERABLE GROUPS SUCH AS WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THE EFFECTS OF POPULATION GROWTH RATES ON LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, NATIONAL AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY AND THE AND INABILITY OF OUR NATIONAL BUDGETS TO MEET IMMEDIATE SOCIAL NEEDS SUCH AS PROVISION OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH FACILITIES ARE VERY FAMILIAR TO US. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT BY ADDRESSING POPULATION ISSUES, THE PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ENHANCED.

THE DAKAR DECLARATION WHICH WAS FURTHER EMBRACED BY THE OAU HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT IN TUNIS ABOUT THREE MONTHS AGO, IS EMPHATIC ABOUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES; t OF MEMBER GOVERNMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE ROLE OF POPULATION IN DEVELOPMENT. THE DAKAR DECLARATION IS EXPLICIT WITH RESPECT TO ACTIONS WHICH NEED TO BE TAKEN. FOR EXAMPLE, IN DAKAR, AFRICAN COUNTRIES AFFIRMED THEIR SOLIDARITY IN dealing POPULATION PROBLEMS AND UNDERTOOK TO "... FORMULATE POPULATION POLICIES RESPECTING THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF EACH COUNTRY ALONG WITH THE FREEDOM, DIGNITY AND INTRINSIC VALUES OF THEIR PEOPLES AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE RELEVANT MORAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS, AND BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR REAFFIRMING THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COUPLES." WE BELIEVE THAT WHAT WE ARE EXPECTED TO ADOPT THERE IN CAIRO IS EXTREMELY CONSISTENT WITH THE

DAKAR AND TUNIS DECLARATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT. IT IS ALSO NOT INCONSISTENT WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS WHICH OUR COUNTRIES ARE SIGNATORIES TO, SUCH AS THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD, AGENDA 21 AND THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN. THIS CONFERENCE MUST NOT BE VIEWED IN ISOLATION; ITS EFFECTS WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPACTS ON FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE UNITED NATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ADOPTION OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THIS PROGRAMME OF ACTION WILL PROVIDE VALUABLE INPUTS FOR THE COPENHAGEN WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE BEIJING FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN.

THE FACTORS HINDERING RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN OUR COUNTRIES ARE FAMILIAR TO MOST OF US. THEY ARE MAINLY FERMENTED BY RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS, INAPPROPRIATE POLICIES AND ESCALATING DEBT BURDEN. EACH AFRICAN COUNTRY IS COMMITTED TO MOBILES AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL AS MUCH RESOURCES AND MEANS AS POSSIBLE TO OVERCOME THESE PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, THE NEED IS ENORMOUS AND OUR ABILITIES ARE LIMITED. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE APPEAL TO DONOR COMMUNITIES TO INCREASE THE LEVELS OF ASSISTANCE TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES. DONOR ASSISTANCE MUST BEGIN TO BE COMMENSURATE WITH THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACED BY THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. OTHERWISE, WE WILL FOREVER FALTER IN OUR ENDEAVOURS TO MEET COMMITMENTS SUCH AS THE ONE WE ARE MAKING TODAY. IN ADDITION, WE REQUEST THAT EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE MUST BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE KEY ISSUES WHICH ARE UNDERSCORED BY THIS CONFERENCE'S PLAN OF ACTION.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND HAS MADE SOME EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS OF VARIOUS POPULATION GROUPS IN OUR COUNTRY. WE HAVE, FOR INSTANCE, UNDERTAKEN A STUDY THAT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSES THE ISSUES RELATED TO THE STATUS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS SUCH AS WOMEN AND THE YOUTH. WE HAVE ALSO MADE SOME GREAT STRIDES TO PROVIDE TO BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS ACCESS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION. HOWEVER, THE RAPID RATE

OF POPULATION GROWTH HAS COMPROMISED THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION. IN HEALTH PROVISION, SWAZILAND IS IN THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING THE MID-DECADE GOALS SET BY THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN, THE ACTION PLAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION, AND THE INNOCENT DECLARATION.

DESPITE OUR EFFORTS, MR. PRESIDENT, WE CONTINUE TO BE HINDERED BY THE UNACCEPTABLY HIGH RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH. IT IS, ESSENTIAL FOR US TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM. FOR US, THIS CONFERENCE IS EXTREMELY TIMELY AS IT WILL PROVIDE US WITH GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING THE POPULATION PROBLEM .

IN CONCLUSION, MR. PRESIDENT, ON BEHALF OF HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT, AND THE PEOPLE OF SWAZILAND I WISH TO THANK YOU, YOUR GOVERNMENT, AND THE PEOPLE OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT FOR THE PLEASANT RECEPTION AND HOSPITALITY YOU HAVE ACCORDED US SINCE OUR ARRIVAL IN THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY AND FOR THE EXCELLENT FACILITIES MADE AVAILABLE FOR THIS CONFERENCE. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT OUR CONFERENCE WILL BE THE SUCCESS THAT IT DESERVES TO BE AND THAT THE RESULTS OF THESE DELIBERATIONS WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO CONCRETE ACTION.

I THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

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