



## 94-09-06: Opening Statement by Dr. Nafis Sadik at ICPD'94

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AS WRITTEN

Statement of Dr. Nafis Sadik

Executive Director

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Secretary-General of the

1994 International Conference on Population and Development

at the opening ceremony of the

International Conference on Population and Development

Cairo, Egypt

5 September 1994

Your Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr.

Secretary-General of the United Nations, Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting in this beautiful and historic city, a modern city with a long tradition, the home of scholarship as well as business and industry; a great centre of Islamic study as well as the seat of government for nearly a thousand years, for a historic conference. We are most grateful to you, Your Excellency, and to the Government of your dynamic and rapidly developing country, for your warm welcome and your gracious hospitality.

Your city and your country have an ancient lineage, Your Excellency, but they are also thoroughly modern. You have set an example for both Arab and African countries with your approach to questions of population and development. It is fitting that this great city will be for the next ten days the centre of the world.

Mr. Secretary-General, it is an honor for me to be in your home country, and to be able personally to thank you for your guidance and wise counsel. From the moment you were elected, Sir, I have been able to count on your unswerving support, and it has continued throughout the preparations for this Conference.

I wish to extend a particular welcome all the heads of state and government: His Excellency the President of Azerbaijan, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of Swaziland, and Vice-President Gore of the United States.

Let me extend a particular welcome to Prime Minister Bhutto and Prime Minister Brundtland. Prime Minister Brundtland was the first head of state to announce that she was coming to Cairo. About Mrs. Bhutto, what can I say? You will be recognized by the world community for your courage and conviction. This is what leadership is all about. Your

presence here demonstrates more clearly than anything else could that we are dealing with an issue of truly global significance.

Mr. Vice-President, you are especially welcome here for your long-standing concern and commitment to environmental issues both in your own country and throughout the world. You are a great champion of the sustainable use of resources and a true friend of those involved in population and development. I am sorry to say that illness has prevented President Suharto of Indonesia from attending the Conference but he has sent a most gracious message. In wishing the Conference success, he writes "I sincerely hope that the Conference will serve as a landmark for a more active co-operation and partnership between nations aimed at sharing experiences in developing the family and population for sustainable development."

I am delighted to welcome my colleagues the heads of the World Bank, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and UNEP. The High Commissioner for Human Rights was unable to be here but has sent a message in which he expresses the strongest support for the Conference. I commend it to the attention of all delegates.

Finally I would like to offer my congratulations to Minister Mahran, the Minister for Family and Population, for his long-standing pursuit of excellence in Egypt's national family planning programme; and my heartfelt thanks for his leadership of the National Preparatory Committee and his excellent management of the preparations for the Conference.

If I may be permitted, I would like to recognize the work of the men and women of the United Nations staff, both those you see around you and those who work behind the scenes. Their effort has made this Conference

possible.

This is a truly all-inclusive Conference. The involvement of 170 countries as well as thousands of non-governmental organizations both local and international, clearly reflects that. As you may have noticed, the media have also paid some attention: as of yesterday evening, 3725 journalists had registered to cover the Conference. Thanks to them, your discussions will reach nearly every home in the world.

The people responsible for this success of the preparatory process are those who worked together during three long years of preparations. The result of all your work is a draft Programme of Action that you will discuss and finalize in the days ahead. You have already agreed nine-tenths of it. This Conference is already a success. As Madame Suzanne Mubarak put it yesterday at the NGO Forum, this Conference is perhaps unique because it has moved from sterile ideological confrontation to making investment in human beings the driving force in dealing with issues of population and development.

The draft you have largely approved is based on the highest of moral principles. It emphasizes people rather than numbers. It concentrates on the quality of life and well being of the family and all its members. I will deal with it at more length later today. For now let me share with you my deepest personal hope for the Conference. It is that you will agree on actions necessary to reduce the needless suffering and death which result from the lack of education, basic health care, family planning and from the lack of control over their lives.

Every day hundreds of women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Every day hundreds of newborn babies die because their mothers lacked basic maternal health care. We have the means at our disposal to prevent this tragedy. Let us agree to do so. in the name of humanity.

You have recognized the facts, you have agreed on objectives. and you have recommended specific actions in well-defined areas. You have demonstrated your willingness to come to grips with some of the most difficult problems of our time. To quote Doctor Ahmed Fathi Sorour, President of Egypt's People's Assembly, it is now time to "debate in good faith and act in harmony for the benefit of mankind." And as you your Excellency said, the benefits to humankind must be universal. In the same spirit, Mr. President, our call for joint action among the world's nations is to help reach the vision of each individual member of the world community.

Thanks to your work in the past, you have a very specific, very action-oriented draft document. With a little more work in the next ten days, the Programme of Action will become part of a sustainable future. I wish you all success.

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