



94-09-06: Statement of Australia, H.E. Nick Bolkus

ISO: AUS

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AS WRITTEN

AUSTRALIA

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

CAIRO

STATEMENT BY

SENATOR THE HON NICK BOLKUS

MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC AFFAIRS

OF AUSTRALIA

CAIRO, EGYPT

5 SEPTEMBER 1994

THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

MR CHAIRMAN

MY DELEGATION IS DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO EGYPT FOR OFFERING CAIRO AS THE SEAT OF
THIS CONFERENCE AND FOR THE GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY BEING PROVIDED TO ALL.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK YOU, MR CHAIRMAN, AND DR SADIK AND THE ICPD
SECRETARIAT, FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY WORK YOU HAVE DONE.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ICPD

WE ARE MEETING IN THE CRADLE OF CIVILISATION, TO ADDRESS ISSUES
FUNDAMENTAL TO ALL FUTURE CIVILISATIONS - THE ISSUES OF POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHALLENGES THEY REPRESENT.

OUR GOALS ARE NOW IN SIGHT. TO ACHIEVE THEM WE WILL NEED TO ENSURE THAT WE WORK ON THE TEXT BEFORE US AND NOT ON ABSTRACTIONS FROM IT.

THIS CONFERENCE'S SIGNIFICANCE IS NOT SOLELY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE CONTENT OF ITS AGENDA - IMPORTANT AND OPPORTUNE THOUGH IT IS. ABOVE ALL, ITS TIMING IS CRITICAL.

AS TO THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR AGENDA, CLEARLY WE ARE NOT HERE TO ADDRESS ONE ISSUE ALONE - NOR ARE WE CONCERNED WITH A SMALL NUMBER OF DISPARATE ISSUES.

THE AGENDA BEFORE US ADDRESSES POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT. WE MUST DEAL WITH CONCERNS INTEGRAL TO THOSE ISSUES AND THEIR INTERRELATION.

WHEN WE ADDRESS ISSUES OF POPULATION, ITS GROWTH, AND PROJECTIONS FOR SUCH GROWTH, WE COME TO THE DEBATE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT, EVERY FOUR DAYS, WE ADD 1 MILLION PEOPLE TO THE WORLD'S POPULATION OF 5.7 BILLION. WE ARE AWARE OF THE IMPACT THIS GROWTH HAS ON STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF LIVING AND ON FINITE RESOURCES.

IN TURN, WHEN WE ADDRESS ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT WE NO LONGER DO SO WITHOUT ADDRESSING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. ONCE AGAIN, WE KNOW THAT TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD IMPACT NEGATIVELY ON STANDARDS OF LIVING.

AND, WE ARE WELL AWARE THAT THESE ISSUES CANNOT BE ADDRESSED ADEQUATELY IF WE DO NOT TACKLE A KEY CONCERN - THE NEED TO REDRESS GENDER IMBALANCE - THE NEED TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT EMPOWERING FOR WOMEN.

AS TO ITS TIMING, THIS CONFERENCE BUILDS ON AGREEMENTS REACHED IN RIO,

PARTICULARLY ON THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. MEMBER NATIONS NEED TO RECOGNISE- THE CENTRALITY OF INDIVIDUAL WELFARE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUCH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

ON THE ROAD FROM RIO, WE ARE DRIVING TOWARDS OTHER MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS, INCLUDING THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN.

WE FIND OURSELVES IN THIS PROCESS AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR - A PERIOD OF TRANSITION FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW - AT A TIME OF RAPID GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CHANGE, AND AT A TIME WHEN WE CAN FOCUS ON BUILDING NEW SOCIETIES AND RELATIONSHIPS, FREE FROM THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS OF THE COLD WAR PERIOD.

ALL OF US, BOTH DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS, COME HERE WITH A COMMON GOAL- -TO WORK TOGETHER, AND INDEPENDENTLY, TO STABILIZE POPULATION GROWTH.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THIS CONFERENCE DOES FIND COMMON GROUND, DOES FIND AREAS OF AGREEMENT, ON THOSE ISSUES THAT ARE CONTENTIOUS.

I KNOW THAT THE HOLY SEE, AND SOME OTHER DELEGATIONS WHICH ADOPT- POLICIES BASED ON ARTICLES OF FAITH, DISAGREE WITH THE MAJORITY OF MEMBER NATIONS ON SOME AREAS OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH. WHILE SUCH BELIEFS AND THE RIGHT TO HOLD THEM MUST BE RESPECTED, WE SHALL FAIL FUTURE GENERATIONS IF THIS CONFERENCE DOES NOT AGREE ON PRACTICAL MEASURES ON FAMILY PLANNING AND WOMEN'S HEALTH. SUCH A FAILURE WOULD NOT ONLY CAUSE HUMAN MISERY BUT WOULD CHALLENGE THE VERY COMMITMENT TO HUMANITY WHICH FORMS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ALL SUCH FAITHS.

LET ME BE CLEAR ON THIS. IF THERE IS A GENUINE WISH FOR CONSENSUS THERE WILL BE A NEED FOR COOPERATION. THAT IS THE INNER NATURE OF OUR SHARED EXISTENCE, OF OUR WORKING TOGETHER.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

BEFORE ADDRESSING THE ISSUES BEFORE US, LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROGRESS ALREADY MADE; THE PRINCIPLES ACCEPTED AND THE STRATEGIES AGREED TO.

THE DRAFT PROGRAMME RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCESSIBLE FAMILY PLANNING AND ITS LINKAGES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

IMPORTANTLY, IT CLEARLY STATES THE NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS TO BE ENTIRELY NON-COERCIVE IN NATURE. THIS CANNOT BE EMPHASIZED TOO STRONGLY AS PEOPLE MUST BE FREE TO DECIDE THE NUMBER AND SPACING OF THEIR CHILDREN. BUT THEY ALSO NEED TO HAVE THE MEANS TO GIVE EFFECT TO THEIR CHOICES. TO FAIL TO RECOGNISE THIS FACT WOULD BE TO DENY AIL LOGIC. WE CANNOT PROMISE PEOPLE DAILY BREAD AND THEN DENY THEM THE FLOUR AND WATER WITH WHICH TO MAKE IT.

MEMBER NATIONS ALSO APPEAR TO HAVE RECOGNIZED THAT THE SUCCESS OF POPULATION POLICIES DEPENDS ON: THE NEED FOR GENDER EQUALITY; EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING; AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN AGREEMENT ON THE NEED TO ADDRESS EXPLICITLY THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES OF WOMEN AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MEN ASSUMING SHARED FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES.

IT IS USEFUL TO PAUSE TO REFLECT ON HOW FAR WE HAVE COME IN REALIZING

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE EQUALLY IN SOCIETY. EVEN TEN YEARS AGO, SOME OF THE AGREED LANGUAGE IN THIS DOCUMENT MAY HAVE BEEN SEEN AS RADICAL, PERHAPS EVEN THREATENING FOR SOME, AND BEYOND THE EXPECTATIONS OF MANY WOMEN. NOT ONLY HAVE WOMEN BEEN TAKING UP THE RIGHTS AND ROLES ENVISAGED IN THIS DOCUMENT BUT SOCIETY HAS BEEN GREATLY ENRICHED IN THEIR DOING SO.

THESE ARE ALL SIGNIFICANT, EVEN HISTORIC, ACHIEVEMENT WITH LANGUAGE AGREED IN MANY AREAS BREAKING NEW GROUND. NOW IS THE TIME TO CONSOLIDATE THESE ACHIEVEMENTS AND TO THIS END LANGUAGE WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN AGREED MUST NOT BE REOPENED.

AUSTRALIA'S OBJECTIVES

AUSTRALIA WILL BE WORKING FOR A STRONG FORWARD LOOKING PROGRAMME OF ACTION - ONE CHARACTERISED LARGELY BY AGREED, PRACTICAL MEASURES LINKING, CONSTRUCTIVELY: POPULATION SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. THE PROGRAMME MUST ALSO RESPECT CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES, WHILE HONOURING INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES.

MY DELEGATION WILL BE SEEKING TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO THE WIDEST POSSIBLE RANGE OF SAFE, EFFECTIVE AND ACCEPTABLE FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES TO ENABLE WOMEN AND MEN, AS A RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY, TO CHOOSE THE NUMBER AND SPACING OF THEIR CHILDREN, CONSISTENT WITH THEIR INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, AND TO REDUCE THE MATERNAL AND INFANT MORTALITY ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH RISK PREGNANCY.

WE WILL SEEK TO PROMOTE COMMITMENT TO NON-COERCIVE POPULATION POLICIES WHICH INTEGRATE THE DELIVERY OF FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES WITH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO RELIEVE THE POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE SO OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH LEVELS OF POPULATION GROWTH, TO MINIMISE WORLD DEMAND FOR ABORTION AND ADDRESS THE REALITY OF THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS ARISING FROM UNSAFE ABORTION.

AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS THE WAY IN WHICH THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION PRESENTS ABORTION - THAT IS, AS AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE.

FAMILY PLANNING IS A UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED TERM. IT WAS ADOPTED BY GOVERNMENTS IN THE 1974 BUCHAREST WORLD POPULATION PLAN OF ACTION. IF THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY PLANNING WERE NOT TO FORM PART OF THE CONSENSUS FROM THIS CONFERENCE, THEN I BELIEVE ITS CREDIBILITY WOULD BE DEEPLY UNDERMINED.

THESE ISSUES CAN BE EMOTIONAL ONES AND HAVE BEEN CONFUSED IN MEDIA REPORTS AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION. FOR EXAMPLE, THIS CONFERENCE IS NOT MAINLY ABOUT ABORTION AS SOME REPORTS CONTINUE TO SUGGEST. IN FACT, IT IS SOMETIMES HARD TO RECONCILE SUCH DISCUSSION WITH THE DOCUMENT NOW BEFORE US.

THE AUSTRALIAN POSITION, MR CHAIRMAN, HAS BEEN INFORMED BY A RECENT INDEPENDENT REPORT THE GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONED IN 1993 INTO THE LINKAGES BETWEEN POPULATION GROWTH AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING OF WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

AUSTRALIA'S REPORT, I AM PLEASED TO SAY, IS AVAILABLE TO ALL DELEGATIONS TO THIS CONFERENCE.

I BELIEVE THAT ITS CONCLUSIONS REINFORCE AND SUPPORT THE ASPIRATIONS OF

THIS CONFERENCE, AS HAVE THE FINDINGS OF MANY OTHER REPORTS IN THE PAST, INCLUDING THAT OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE LAST JUNE.

AT WHAT POINT DO WE PAY HEED TO THE EXPERT ADVICE?

AUSTRALIA IS ALSO CONCERNED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DOES NOT RETREAT FROM THE UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED AT RIO, JUST TWO YEARS AGO. IT THEREFORE ATTACHES IMPORTANCE TO THE LINKAGES BETWEEN POPULATION, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT BEING REFLECTED THROUGHOUT THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION.

MR CHAIRMAN

THE UNITED NATIONS, THROUGH THIS CONFERENCE, HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE AT THE LEADING EDGE OF PUBLIC THINKING BY RECOGNISING THE UNIQUE IDENTITY, CULTURE AND INTERESTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR NEED FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE GENERALLY AMONG THE MOST DISADVANTAGED OF POPULATIONS. THEY DESERVE SPECIAL SUPPORT, AIMED AT EXPANDING THEIR CHOICES AND OPPORTUNITIES, NOT JUST AS MARGINALISED AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS, BUT AS CUSTODIANS OF VALUES AND UNDERSTANDINGS WHICH BIND THEM IN A DURABLE AND ENDURING RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND.

INDIGENOUS CULTURES, SUCH AS THOSE OF THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES, EXISTED IN HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD FOR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS. THESE WERE NOT CULTURES OF WASTE AND OVER-CONSUMPTION. THEIR SPIRITUAL VALUES AND LIFESTYLES REFLECTED GREAT RESPECT FOR THE LIVING AND NON-LIVING ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUSTAINED THEM.

IN THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION, AUSTRALIA'S INTERESTS, AND THOSE OF MANY OTHER COUNTRIES, ARE MIRRORED IN THE PRINCIPLE ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. AUSTRALIA BELIEVES, MR CHAIRMAN, THAT NO DOCUMENT FROM THIS CONFERENCE WOULD BE COMPLETE IF THIS PRINCIPLE WERE NOT TO BE RETAINED.

MULTICULTURALISM

THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION EMPHASISES THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE HOST SOCIETY.

AUSTRALIA FULLY CONCURS WITH THIS APPROACH.

OVER THE FULL LIFE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AUSTRALIA HAS ACTIVELY PROMOTED IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA. TODAY'S RESULTANT POPULATION INCLUDES PEOPLE FROM MORE THAN 130 ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS AND OVER 220 NATIONALITIES. NEARLY A QUARTER OF AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION WAS BORN OUT OF THE COUNTRY. FORTY PER CENT WAS EITHER BORN OVERSEAS OR HAD AT LEAST ONE PARENT BORN OVERSEAS. SIGNIFICANTLY, AUSTRALIA IS ALSO RELATIVELY FREE OF SOCIAL TENSIONS RESULTING FROM ETHNIC DIVERSITY.

TO A LARGE EXTENT, THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO AUSTRALIA'S MULTICULTURALISM POLICIES, POLICIES WHICH ARE INCLUSIVE BY NATURE AND WHICH AIM TO MAXIMISE PARTICIPATION AND FAIR TREATMENT FOR ALL.

THIS IS ONE OF THE KEY ISSUES TO BE EXAMINED AT THE 1.995 GLOBAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY CONFERENCE, TO BE HOSTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN APRIL NEXT YEAR AS PART OF AUSTRALIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR TOLERANCE.

THE CONFERENCE, TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, DR. BOUTROS-BOUTROS GHALI, WILL PROVIDE ANOTHER PLATFORM FOR EXCHANGING IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES ON BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION IN SOCIETIES RICH IN LINGUISTIC, RACIAL, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY. IT WILL ALSO EXAMINE WAYS IN WHICH SUCH DIVERSITY CAN BE VIEWED AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASSET.

CITIES AND THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY CONFERENCE

THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION EMPHASISES URBAN DEVELOPMENT THAT IS BOTH PARTICIPATORY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE.

AUSTRALIA IS ANXIOUS TO ADVANCE THESE ISSUES AND WILL BE DOING SO THROUGH THE CITIES AND THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY CONFERENCE, WHICH IS BEING JOINTLY ORGANISED WITH THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, TO BE HELD THIS NOVEMBER IN MELBOURNE.

CONCLUSION

MR CHAIRMAN

WE NEED TO AGREE ON A FINAL DOCUMENT WHICH HAS INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY AND CAN BE IMPLEMENTED. IT ALSO NEEDS TO BE ONE WHICH SERVES AS A STEPPING STONE, AND NOT AN OBSTACLE, FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN.

I HOPE THAT THIS ANCIENT CITY CAN AGAIN PROMOTE REAL PROGRESS TOWARDS
A MORE JUST, PEACEFUL AND STABLE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY - TOWARDS A
BETTER CIVILISATION.

THANK YOU, MR CHAIRMAN.

For further information, please contact: popin@undp.org
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