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AS WRITTEN

Madam/Mr. Chairman Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentleman

Representing the Belgian Government, in my capacity of Secretary of
 State for Development Cooperation, it is a great honor for me to address
 this ICPD.

As never before, human life is proliferating. The world population has
 doubled in only thirty years. Life expectancy at birth has improved from
 40 to 63 years in the past forty years. This is more than during the
 entire previous span of human history. In the same period, child
 mortality has decreased from 280 to 106 per 1000 births. Adult
 mortality has been reduced to half in the same period.

From a historical and biological point of view, this is an overwhelming
 success, resulting from the substantial progress that has been achieved
 in the fields of science and technology. However, we must also

acknowledge the adverse effects of the demographic boom and especially its possible detrimental effect on sustainable human development.

M/Mrs. Chairman,

The limitations of natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable) and their unequal distribution, the fragility of the world's ecosystem, the spectacular increase of people's mobility and the technological revolution in the field of communication have made clear to us the profound interdependency of all nations, peoples and individuals. This leads to the inevitable need for worldwide solidarity and global responsibility. More than ever before local activities and actions have a regional impact. The so-called "global village" has become a reality. It is indeed very clear that, in the long run, further progress and sustainable development will only be achieved by actions inspired on the basis of global unity and consensus.

With regard to the population issue, it becomes obvious that quantity may be determined to the quality of life. I believe that all efforts should be focused on creating an appropriate environment conducive to the improvement of the quality life of all people.

Therefore, human rights are a basic condition for the quality of life. Sexual and reproductive rights and responsibilities are undoubtedly part of these rights. Our population policies should be based on this premise. It is extremely important that family planning goes together with other actions in the field of sexual and reproductive life, such as HIV/AIDS and STD control activities and safe motherhood initiatives. The free choice of couples and individuals to use contraceptives has to be respected. But this choice can only exist when appropriate

information and education is provided and people are properly motivated.

Information and education, in particularly in the field of sexual behavior and fertility regulation are to be valued as one of the major tools for increased and sustainable development. Their access, on an equal basis for men and women, becomes increasingly urgent and necessary.

M/Mrs. Chairman,

More than ever before, the respect for human rights, gender equality and equity should be incorporated as basic principles in future action programs. All groups of society regardless of age, sex, social economical and political background should be treated equally Women's improvement is essential and must be one of the cornerstones of any efficient population policy. Moreover, great importance should be given to all measures leading to the active involvement of adolescents and men. In the long run, gender solidarity and common responsibility is the ultimate goal.

All population programmes should be integrated in strategies of poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Integrated structures for the administration of sexual and reproductive services, including family planning and mother and child services, should be promoted in the framework of national policies and strategies.

All policies should establish a fair balance between objectives and national resources. Therefore, national capacities, should be intensively built up. Any well balanced investment in the social sector, and especially in the field of population, will, also in the long run, have a positive impact on economic development.

M/Mrs. Chairman

Increased international coordination and co-operation must be pursued and implemented. The UNFPA, in close collaboration with the other UN organizations, must further be the thriving force with regard to assistance for the development of national strategies, their implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

More resources should be allocated to well conceived and integrated population programmes. The identification of and response to unmet needs must be one of the most urgent objectives to be considered.

Belgium is committed to contribute to the attainment of the objectives that will be put forward in the course of the Conference. Building upon the achievements of past policies and projects, it is our intention in the domain of population issues, education and health and in particular sexual and reproductive health.

M/Mrs. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate the Government and the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting this Conference and to thank Mrs. Sadik and her staff for the considerable efforts to make a success of this Conference.

Belgium hopes that at the end we indeed will have accepted a balanced Programme of Action.

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