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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address, in the name of the European
Commission, this International Conference on Population and Development,
in which the European Community is a full participant, particularly
owing to its development policy which, with a budget of 4 billion

dollars, makes the Community an important partner in the follow-up of this Conference.

May I first of all thank those who have made this participation possible. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and you, Ladies and Gentlemen the Vice-Presidents, on your election. You have accepted a high responsibility and you can count on the cooperation of the European Community for the success of this Conference.

May I also be permitted to thank the Egyptian Government for its hospitality and for the excellent organization of this Conference.

My intervention will provide elements of reflection additional to those contained in the speech of the German Delegation which exercises at present the Presidency of the European Union.

Mr. President,

The objective of the Conference is ultimately to improve the condition of children, women and men of our generation, whose interests we safeguard, and to ensure for them a healthy and secure environment. This calls for an integrated approach to the questions of population, development and the environment, and therefore a freely controlled level of fertility .

The controlling of levels of fertility is above all a question of dignity, of freedom and of responsibility of men and women who must be able to choose how many children they wish to have. in accordance with which rhythm, and afterwards to be able to give them the care and affection which they need in order to flourish. That is the reason why

the agenda of this Conference is naturally directed to the themes of equality in law and in fact of women, of their effective access to education, to health for themselves and their children, on the eradication of poverty and the improvement of the environment.

The principal merit of the programme of Action is to take at the same time a wide and ambitious view, which is also a realistic and concrete one, of all the problems posed in the domain of population and development and to address them without hypocrisy or dissembling, but in a spirit of tolerance which seeks, with the respect of human rights, the elements of an attitude of openness towards cultural and religious differences.

The results obtained in the domain of migrations reflect this preoccupation since on that subject the Action Programme recommends integrating legal immigrants in the host countries, whilst combating racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia on the one hand, and ensuring that migrations contribute to the development of their countries of origin on the other hand. This also applies to the text concerning the family where nonetheless positions were quite far from each other at the outset. The Programme of Action which the Conference is called to adopt, embodies quite rightly four key areas of action in order to contain a too rapid demographic growth: education, in particular of girls; the reduction of infant mortality; the reinforcement of the rights and the role of women in our societies; and the generalization of services in the fields of sexuality and reproductive health, including family planning.

I would like to recall here the UNFPA estimate that there are 300 million men and women who would like to have access to family planning but who do not; one of the consequences of this is, according to the

same source, that each year there would be 50 million abortions of which many would lead furthermore to the death of the mother. Knowing this, we can no longer close our eyes or turn our backs. In the very name of the value which we attach to human life, we must recommend, whilst respecting the sovereignty of each country, those policies which will respond to these problems.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The draft final document of the Conference provides the basis for a solid final agreement which represents a significant advance on the Programme of Action of Bucharest.

In so far as life expectancy, maternal and infant mortality are concerned, agreement on quantified objectives which reconcile both ambition and realism is well within our reach.

The notions of sexual health and reproduction, of rights in the field of sexuality and reproduction, of regulation of fertility and the connected and yet so important problem of abortion can, I am convinced, be addressed in a true, solid and substantive consensus.

The Presidency of the European Union will present on these different points texts which, because they result from agreement among twelve countries with different conceptions and legislation's, but which share a common set of fundamental humanist values, should contribute to this consensus.

There is finally the question of financing population policies and programmes. An agreement already exists on the need to mobilize a

significant amount of additional financial resources from the international community, from the developing countries and from the countries in transition. It is up to the developing countries themselves to implement and to contribute in a substantive way to the actions and efforts necessary in the field of population. But the donor countries must also make their contribution, which is in any case crucial in the case of the least advanced countries. Difficulties still remain on the financial question and we are ready to work on these difficulties in an open-minded way.

The European Community committed itself a long time ago to increasing its social development programmes which often incorporate a demographic component: specific population programmes have reached an amount of 40 million dollars. The Commission will propose to the Council of the Union and to the European Parliament that this specific effort should be brought gradually to 300 million ecus between now and the year 2000, in part by transfers and in part by the reinforcement of appropriate budgetary lines, on the condition, however, that our developing partners propose to us the necessary projects to absorb this Community aid. This sum is evidently only one element of the package of the EU since it is additional to the efforts of our Member States themselves.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the end of this 20th century the world is confronted by immense challenges, challenges which are inextricably linked and to which we must respond by bold global policies: the challenge of peace, of development and of the eradication of poverty, of democracy and of human rights, of the protection of the environment, and of demography.

There is no field in which North and South have more reason to

cooperate together than that of population and development: on the one hand it is there that the gaps are the most flagrant and the most shocking between women and children of the North and those of the South: on the other, it is there that cooperation can give the most rapid results.

The European Community with its humanism, synthesis of the great monotheistic religions and of the Enlightenment. has no intention of imposing its values on the world. It seeks through dialogue and common action to set free universal values in order to establish policies capable of giving to all women and to all men their dignity as human beings. This is the spirit in which it is participating in this Conference which owes so much to the energy and the vision of its Secretary General, Dr. Nafis Sadik.

Thank you very much.

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