



**94-09-06: Statement of Papua New Guinea, H.E. Mr.F.Koimanrea**

ISO: PNG

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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT BY

H.E. MR. UTULA U. SAMANA, CMG

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

CAIRO, EGYPT

5 TO 13 SEPTEMBER 1994

Excellency, Mr. President, it is indeed an honor to be in this ancient,  
 Biblical land of Egypt - the cradle of civilization, and this great city  
 of Cairo for the International conference on Population and Development.

Papua New Guinea congratulates you on your election as President of this  
 important Conference and wish to thank the Government and the people of  
 Egypt for the warm reception and generous hospitality accorded my

Delegation.

I also extend my Government's gratitude to the distinguished Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the Conference, Dr. Nafis Sadik, and members of the Secretariat for the excellent work in the preparations for this historical gathering.

Mr. President, my attendance like that of the distinguished delegations from the South Pacific region, demonstrates once again our political commitment to the Program of Action called for by the international community on population and development.

I am pleased to say that the global community has made significant progress in identifying and agreeing to constructive solutions required to redress the imbalance created by the problems of rapid population escalation in developing countries and unsustainable consumption patterns in the developed countries.

I concur with the views expressed by Her excellency, Secretary-General Sadik, at the Second Committee of the 48th United Nations General Assembly, that we - the international community - should not open up old problems at this Conference.

This document before us is not a substitute, but reflects an all embracing declaration that compliments both past and future Programme of Actions of the United Nations, such as that which was recently adopted at the Global Conference on Small Island Developing States, otherwise known as the Barbados Declaration.

Papua New Guinea's population growth rate has consistently averaged around 2.3 percent which is of serious concern to my Government, in light of the relatively high population growth my country faces, my Government has taken certain measure to contain it to a manageable level.

In March 1991, my Government approved an integrated National Population Policy for progress and development. The key objective of the Policy is to reduce population growth and to maintain it at a level which is sustainable in terms of the nation's resources and economic development.

The other objectives of the population police are:

To improve the standard of living and quality of life of the people

To improve the health and welfare of the population through preventing the premature deaths and illness among high risk groups; especially mothers and children:

To achieve a population growth rate which will not threaten future development prospects;

To achieve universal primary education and expand secondary education.

We recognize the importance of slowing population growth and keeping it in balance with economic development prospects. We realize that population planning will give the Government assurance and confidence for broader development planning. For example, with a reduced population growth, less expenditure will be spend on schools and health services and more on promoting and creating opportunities for employment.

Firm steps have been taken and commitment to implement the population policy. One of the major initiative is the mobilization of international agencies to assist the Government implement the policy objectives. The world bank, ADB, AIDAB and UNFPA has put together project programmes to strengthen population, family planning and reproductive health issues.

I would caution this conference in making specific targets and goals. Although these targets and goals may not be binding, we believe that only sovereign Governments can make that decision based on their resources.

Mr. President, My Government endorses family planning, safe motherhood, reproductive health care and contraceptive use as defined by the World Health Organization.

Informed and free choice to proper family planning is also encouraged. In this regard, my Government does not intend to control the size of families, nor to endorse a particular method of family planning. This is a choice and right for the people to decide.

As policy makers, our role is to ensure that proper awareness and the provision of basic health and education related services are provided at all levels.

We too share the view, that the challenges before the world community is controlling the rapid growth of population to manageable levels - whilst improving the human capacity, as well as ensuring greater participation of the populous to enhance sustained economic growth, especially in developing countries. This theme, in development process, is given

priority consideration in the operational activities of the United Nations. t

The growing awareness of the inter-linkages between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development has reached international prominence, and hence - the international community is further urged to develop a comprehensive approach to tackle these issues before they reach a chronic and unmanageable situation.

Papua New Guinea has many different cultures and traditions with a known 900 languages spoken by about four (4) million people, mostly in rural areas, and Mr. Chairman, you can imagine the enormous task that my Government must endure in delivering the basic services in health and education. This is a challenging task for our social planners, bearing in mind that most of these areas are only accessible by light aircraft.

Population and development issues, therefore, in our context must consider carefully the unique and diverse ethnicities of population, as it relates to their different cultural heritage - governing their social behavior and individual status in society, as we endeavor to reach policy consensus at the national and international level.

To narrow the gap between developed and developing countries, the current patterns of consumption, trade and investments have to be restructured to avoid social, economic and political disequilibrium that may lead to further tensions in the near future .

The Government has through the Department of Finance & Planning established the National Advisory Committee on Population Policy charged to devise and implement the National Population Policy. The formation of our population policy was not easy and required careful coordination

amongst individuals, institutions, non-government organizations, and government departments and agencies.

The implementation of the policy entails two (2) components. The first component relates to the setting up of the institutional organization and mechanisms for coordination of plans and programmes related to population and development. The second and final stage will be the launching of the policies and programmes to ensure the achievements of the goals and objectives.

Close collaboration amongst all parties is the key to the success of this policy. We are ensuring that this happens in a smooth and effective manner.

As a former Minister for Education in the National Parliament, I strongly advocate that education plays a key role in promoting relevant skills and attitudes that enables people to creatively apply themselves in resolving their socio- economic problems. Papua New Guinea has embarked on major education reform, in terms of its contents and direction, stressing basic quality education for all, and the promotion of relevant technical and vocational skills, and adequate support for the development of competent high-level human resources. (i.e. technical and management areas).

The Department of Education has been developing a project, which uses radio to broadcast lessons in Science and English. This project is now being expanded to health, illiteracy, environment and sustainable development. It has the full support of the Government and has received praise from many countries for the national content and training. I am pleased that key players in this project are women.

Population planning, is being therefore addressed in the context of proper and relevant education, training and support of the family, and especially taking into consideration the status, the role and participation of women as a critical factor in the success of any population policy.

The Government has recognized that family planning services are crucial for health and safety and the livelihood of mothers, fathers and children. With the outbreak of the aids epidemic and the threat of other sexually transmitted diseases, the Government has since moved to introduce sex education in schools at the appropriate levels.

In Papua New Guinea's Melanesian lifestyle, the large majority of women have their status in society, determined by "taim bilong tumbuna" - which literally means - the time of our ancestors. The rapid changes in our country through introduction of material goods, has signaled a re-direction in measures to tackle these new problems - bearing in mind the need for stability and the equal participation of all sectors of the community.

Decisions on the use of contraceptives are often left to the individuals.

Our more pressing challenges faced by our developing country are urban drift, unemployment, adequate shelter and application of modern laws and regulations in a predominantly traditional system of tribal legacy and kinship security.

Our Constitution enshrines the right of all people to freedom of movement and thus our country is experiencing what many developed

countries went through during the early industrial revolution, with urban drift by those in search of formal employment for cash. A country blessed with natural resources, such as mine, needs international support to encourage jobs in rural areas, where people can enjoy a far better life, whilst contributing effectively to the economy.

The financial and technical assistance for developing countries is crucial. We are pleased to note that certain countries have already indicated future increase in their financial support for population and sustainable development programmes.

The 20/20 concept introduced in the past few months, which calls for 20 percent of national budgets to be allocated to the social sector, generally, is a good starting point, but we feel that more thought and discussion is needed to elaborate further on the concept to see if the ideas can be injected widely in the social and economic activities of the United Nations.

All distinguished delegates at this conference, who are the authors of the Programme of Action, should work towards common grounds and adopt a realistic approach to the multifaceted issues and problems that confronts the growing interdependent global community.

The common grounds are many and my delegation is confident that with the gifted guidance of the Chairman, this Conference will adopt a monumental document which will highlight the nature and the extent of the problems, without fear, whilst maintaining the balance in the spirit of progress.

As I conclude, may I emphasize that this Conference is a decision making conference on issues of population and development.



Development means improving peoples lives, particularly women who do not acquire the basic services.

Strategies for development, may indeed, be more important than the objectives we talk about. Population control will be better managed as we apply it to overall investment in human development. Family planning is only one component.

Finally, Mr. Chairman

Finally, Mr. Chairman, may I take this opportunity to express my Delegation's sincere gratitude to the Secretariat of the Conference, the UNFPA Offices in Port Moresby and Suva, for their contributions that has led to our participation from the preparatory meetings to the final leg of this Conference. We also wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Government and the people of Egypt for their warm hospitality and great efforts in facilitating this Conference.

We remain, indeed keen, to further strengthening the Programme of Action and working closely with you and the Bureau to make this conference a huge success.

Thank you.

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For further information, please contact: [popin@undp.org](mailto:popin@undp.org)  
POPIN Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/11/ungophers/popin>  
POPIN WWW site: <http://www.undp.org/popin>