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Statement

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Mr. President, Dr. Sadik, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is said that we face a clash of civilizations. It is said that
around the globe. in societies rich and poor, battle lines are forming
between the forces of modernism and a secular world view, and the
forces of tradition and a religious world view.

It is said that this conference has become a battle field of these contending forces. But it should not be. We cannot allow it to happen.

The religious leaders who have participated in this great event and the debates this conference has stimulated have reminded us that this conference is also about building a moral world order. We can take this opportunity to elevate our work here to a higher, more moral plane. As a result, what is done here will be more important, not less.

Which of us can look with equanimity on the disintegration of the family; on the exploitation of women as sex objects and in countless other ways; on violence and its glorification in our societies; on the epidemics of crime, drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS; on a world that promotes orgies of consumption while most of our people are deprived of basic necessities like health care, education, and decent jobs.

Population pressures and the subjugation of women contribute centrally to many of these problems. You are now framing ambitious and important responses to these challenges in the Cairo Programme of Action. I am impressed with your accomplishments. It will be historic.

Here is the truth of this matter. Regardless of the disagreements among you - all of you, delegates, NGOs and others - you are here because you care. You are among those who have the faith and the hope that a moral and just world order can be built. That is what all religion is about - caring and loving, dignity and justice, faith and hope - and that is what this conference is about. So on this high ground, this is not a meeting of the divided gathering of the united.

The great civilizing and educating institutions of the world all

have at their core the values of human solidarity, tolerance, justice and equity. These are the values on which we must build in order to truly address the challenges that are unmistakable threats--not merely to human dignity and survival--but to the survival of human spirituality as well.

When we talk about development, we're talking about these values. But we're also talking about people's needs.

What is needed to achieve the goals of Cairo is sustainable human development.

This is development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment instead of destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, that enlarges their choices and opportunities, and that provides for their participation in events and decisions that shape their lives. It is development that is pro-people, pro-poor- pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women.

Development gives people the choice to live a long and healthy life, to be educated, and to have a decent standard of living. And development provides other choices too--political freedom, human rights and self-respect.

Without development, people have no choices. And without choices, men and women will continue to have large families, and our numbers will continue to grow.

UNDP strives to give people choices by educating women and

advancing their rights and opportunities, improving health care, giving the poor access to credit, by making sure people have clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, and enough food to eat.

This conference is about such choices.

The Draft Programme of Action spells out the inextricable links between lower fertility rates and development. Thus, just as our understanding of development is becoming fuller and more profound, so is our understanding of population.

The Draft Preamble to the Programme of Action notes this conference is our last opportunity in the 20th century to collectively address the critical challenges and interrelationships between population and development.

We in the UN system must rise to this challenge.

The UN development system is composed of a uniquely rich group of programs and agencies. We must build on this strength, forging each agency's complementary mandate into well-integrated, effective and coordinated support for countries' endeavors to realize a common goal of sustainable human development.

Important discussions are under way among UNDP, the UN Population Fund and UNICEF to ensure that these agencies adopt a coherent approach to the outcomes of this conference. The first step has been our joint issuance of a proposal for a "20/20 Initiative," which aims to ensure that all people have access to basic social services. We hope this conference will move forward with this recommendation.

Not only do we need to coordinate our response to this conference, but we also need to coordinate our response to other major conferences as well. ICPD isn't a discrete event. It's one part of a series of conferences that are all related because they each cover an important aspect of development. If we care about the Cairo agenda, we also need to care about the agenda for next year's UN Social Summit in Copenhagen, and the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing. And we need to look back to the Earth Summit, for population, development and environment are actually one issue. This population conference is one more step in a long march toward development, but it is a vitally important step.

Population programmes must be fused with powerful measures to promote sustainable human development if Cairo's goals are to be realized. Consider the alternative. A continued surge in population growth would place tremendous additional demands on the job market, food supplies, housing, water, health and education services. Cities will become more crowded, filthy and impoverished. Forests will be stripped clean, and vast tracts of agricultural land will degenerate into lifeless desert. The tide of migration will be unstoppable.

It is the moral duty of each one of us to address this problem.

Many in the industrialized world don't seem to realize that they're part of the problem too. But nothing could be farther from reality. It's time to stop riding the merry-go-round of denial. At the global level, population growth in the developing world isn't the main threat to our planet's sustainability. The biggest threat comes from population growth and resource consumption in the industrialized world.

For example, the average United States citizen consumes about 20 times as many natural resources as the average citizen of India. So an additional 10 million people in the United States put just as much pressure on our planet as an additional 200 million Indians.

We have a collective responsibility to find a lasting answer, not a simple one. This collective responsibility goes beyond declarations, no matter how important these may be. This responsibility means an international commitment to development. And this commitment means concrete actions financial commitments, international partnerships. As Mrs. Mubarak said on Sunday at the opening of the NGO forum, "it is the NGOs in partnership with women who have often been the first to address population issues in development programs and projects aimed at empowering women through education, health and economic opportunities."

The hard facts are that despite the agreements reached at the 1992 Earth Summit, the world's commitment to development is waning. International development assistance is on the decline. It's time for us to reverse that trend. It's time for us to confound the cynics and show them that this conference isn't about empty rhetoric and breakable promises.

Donors--and developing countries--must support the population actions agreed upon in Cairo. But they should do so with new development-assistance funding, not by just earmarking scarce existing resources. Robbing one worthy objective for another is not a worthy answer. If the goals of Cairo are to be realized, donors should also increase funding aimed at development. An international population strategy built on a foundation without development will eventually topple.

The founders of the United Nations had the foresight to create a forum for the peoples of the world to debate and reach agreement on all issues that affect the future of humanity .It is only natural that there should be different points of view in different groups and member states.

We should use these differences as a source of strength and draw energy from the diversity of humanity to tackle the challenges that face us.

We are not here to fight a great battle; we are here to achieve a great victory. A victory over ignorance and intolerance. A victory over discrimination and subjugation. A victory over inaction. A victory for future generations. Not to achieve this victory would be the greatest tragedy of all.

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