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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT  
OF THE AUSTRIAN DELEGATION  
TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

BY

MS.MARIA RAUCH-KALLAT  
FEDERAL MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT,  
YOUTH AND FAMILY AFFAIRS  
MS. JOHANNA DOHNAL  
FEDERAL MINISTER  
FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS  
CAIRO, 6TH SEPTEMBER. 1994

MR. PRESIDENT,

EXCELLENCIES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

FIRST OF ALL LET ME CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR ELECTION AND WISH YOU BEST SUCCESS IN YOUR DIFFICULT TASK OF STEERING THIS CONFERENCE TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. OUR THANKS GO TO THE ORGANIZERS OF THE CONFERENCE, ESPECIALLY TO MS. SADIK, TO THE HOST COUNTRY AND PRESIDENT MUBARAK WHOSE INITIATIVE TO INVITE THIS CONFERENCE TO CAIRO WE HIGHLY APPRECIATE.

MR. PRESIDENT, SINCE AGAIN A PROBLEM OF GLOBAL PROPORTIONS HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. TO REACH COMMON UNDERSTANDING ON THE PROPER WAY TO DEAL WITH POPULATION ISSUES DURING THE COMING YEARS IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. WE SHOULD THEREFORE MAKE EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT TO ARRIVE AT A CONSENSUS TEXT WHICH CAN SERVE AS A GUIDELINE TO GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

WE ARE NOT STARTING FROM SCRATCH. RATHER CAN WE BASE OURSELVES UPON THE VALUABLE WORK DONE AT THE PREVIOUS POPULATION CONFERENCES OF BUCHAREST AND MEXICO. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF EXPERIENCE SINCE MADE WE HAVE NOW ARRIVED AT A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF POPULATION ISSUES AND HAVE, THEREFORE, BEEN ABLE TO GO SIGNIFICANTLY BEYOND THE DOCUMENTS ADOPTED BY THE TWO PREVIOUS CONFERENCES. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE OF THE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO POPULATION ISSUES REFLECTED IN THE DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION IN FRONT OF US. POPULATION ISSUES ARE NOT DEALT WITH AS AN ISOLATED PHENOMENON. BUT IN COHERENCE WITH THE OVERALL PROCESS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

THE KEY CONCEPT THAT COUPLES AND INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE IN A POSITION TO DECIDE FREELY AND RESPONSIBLY THE NUMBER AND SPACING OF THEIR CHILDREN IS NOT NEW. IT REMAINS AS VALID AS BEFORE. TO DECIDE FREELY MEANS THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO COERCION WHICH AGAIN MEANS THAT POPULATION POLICIES MUST BE FULLY CONSISTENT WITH HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS HOLDS PARTICULARLY TRUE FOR THE STATUS AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN WHO OBVIOUSLY PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN QUESTIONS OF HUMAN PROCREATION. I THEREFORE WELCOME THE FACT THAT THE PLAN OF ACTION TO BE ADOPTED BY US PAYS FULL ATTENTION TO THE ROLE AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. SIMILAR CONCEPTS HAVE, BY THE WAY, FOUND EXPRESSION IN THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN VIENNA LAST YEAR

TO DECIDE FREELY DOES NOT ONLY IMPLY THE RIGHT TO DO SO BUT ALSO THAT THE MEANS SHOULD BE AT THE DISPOSAL OF EVERYBODY CONCERNED. THIS ENTAILS THE NECESSITY TO GREATLY INCREASE OUR EFFORTS WITH REGARD TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INCLUDING FAMILY PLANNING SO THAT MEN AND WOMEN IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD FIND THEMSELVES IN A POSITION TO DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF THEIR CHILDREN. WE BELIEVE THAT SLOWING THE GROWTH OF POPULATION IN POOR COUNTRIES WILL MAKE IT EASIER TO COMBAT POVERTY AND ACHIEVE CONTINUOUS ECONOMIC GROWTH. AT THE SAME TIME WE BELIEVE

THAT POPULATION PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED SPECIFICALLY FOR EACH COUNTRY. THEY SHOULD ALSO BE SET UP UNDER THE AUTHORITY AND FULL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED.

THE REPRODUCTIVE DECISIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS SHOULD NOT ONLY BE MADE FREELY BUT ALSO RESPONSIBLY. OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO OUR CHILDREN WHO SHOULD BE GIVEN THE BEST POSSIBLE STARTING CONDITIONS IN LIFE. THE EROSION EFFECTS OF FAST GROWING POPULATIONS ON ATTEMPTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROVIDE THEIR CITIZENS WITH BETTER HEALTH CARE, BETTER EDUCATION AND A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING ARE WELL DOCUMENTED. THERE IS ALSO A

RESPONSIBILITY TO FUTURE GENERATIONS WHOSE SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE LIMITED RESOURCES OF OUR PLANET.

IT IS IMPORTANT BUT NOT SUFFICIENT TO CREATE THE NECESSARY LEGAL AND MATERIAL PRECONDITIONS FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO EXERCISE THEIR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN A MANNER CONDUCIVE TO THEIR WELL-BEING. HOWEVER, OUR EFFORTS WILL REMAIN INCOMPLETE UNLESS WE SUCCEED IN FULLY INTEGRATING THE RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE IN OUR THINKING AND ACTING. THIS APPLIES TO THE UNBORN AS WELL AS TO THE DISABLED OR THE AGED.

MR. PRESIDENT, AS MINISTER NOT ONLY IN CHARGE OF FAMILY AND YOUTH AFFAIRS BUT ALSO OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CONSIDER IT A DUTY TO SAY A WORD ON THE THREATS OF UNCHECKED POPULATION GROWTH FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT. ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CALCULATE THE POTENTIAL CARRYING CAPACITY OF THE EARTH FOR HUMAN ACTIVITY, WE WOULD BE WELL ADVISED NOT TO TEST THE LIMITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENDURANCE. IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF THE NORTH THE ENVIRONMENT IS UNDER TREMENDOUS STRESS DUE TO PREVAILING PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION URGENT SOLUTIONS ARE CALLED FOR. THE CHANGE OF LIFE-STYLES IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE BUT IT IS NOT A SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS CONFERENCE.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION DUE TO POVERTY AND RAPID POPULATION GROWTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES MAY BE OF A COMPARATIVELY LESSER PROPORTION AT THIS STAGE. BUT IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THE ALARM BELLS ARE ALREADY RINGING. COMPLACENCY IS OUT OF PLACE. THE INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND A SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE BASE TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF THE LIVING AND OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ARE WELL KNOWN. THEY SHOULD MOTIVATE GOVERNMENTS TO ADOPT MEASURES AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

WITHOUT ANY DOUBT, WE NEED TO APPLY A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WHICH

SIMULTANEOUSLY ADDRESSES THE QUESTIONS OF POPULATION GROWTH, POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION. ONLY IF THESE ISSUES ARE DEALT WITH IN A COHERENT MANNER CAN WE HOPE TO DEAL SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE CHALLENGES IN FRONT OF US. THIS CONFERENCE IS AN IMPORTANT, I WOULD HOPE, A DECISIVE STEP IN THIS PROCESS. MY DELEGATION WILL DO ITS UTMOST TO BRING IT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION.

MR. PRESIDENT, WITH YOUR PERMISSION I SHOULD NOW LIKE TO ASK MY COLLEAGUE MRS. JOHANNA DOHNAL, AUSTRIA'S MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, TO MAKE USE OF THE REMAINING SPEAKING TIME ASSIGNED TO US AND TAKE THE FLOOR. THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

MR. PRESIDENT,  
EXCELLENCIES  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IS FACED WITH AN ENORMOUS CHALLENGE: KEY PROBLEMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS WELL AS OF MEN AND WOMEN AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL ARE TO BE TACKLED: THE NEED TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THE NEED TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF POVERTY AND THE NEED TO GIVE WOMEN MORE POWER. POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES ARE DECISIVE FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD.

I WISH TO CONGRATULATE MS NAFIS SADIK ON HER EXCELLENT PREPARATION OF THE CONFERENCE. ALSO, I DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE UNMENTIONED THIS YEAR'S WORLD POPULATION REPORT, WHICH - UNDER THE EXPERT GUIDANCE OF MS SADIK - PROVIDES US WITH WELL-FOUNDED ANALYSES AND DATA FOR OUR DELIBERATIONS.

THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORLD POPULATION REPORT ARE CLEAR CUT: THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IS THE KEY TO POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN MEANS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN THE GENDERS FROM BIRTH ONWARDS. IT MEANS EXTENDING CHOICES: CHOICES ABOUT IF AND WHEN TO GET MARRIED; CHOICES ABOUT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES; CHOICES ABOUT THEIR OWN LIVES.

EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN MEANS MORE THAN JUST THE RIGHT TO BIRTH CONTROL IT MEANS POWER-SHARING, IT MEANS BETTER ACCESS TO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, IT MEANS ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE OF WOMEN. WOMEN WANT RE-DISTRIBUTION IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. WOMEN WANT TO DECIDE ON THEIR FUTURE BY THEMSELVES.

MR. PRESIDENT,

THIS CONFERENCE HAS THE AIM TO REALIZE THE RIGHTS, NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN AND MEN WITH RESPECT TO POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.

AUSTRIA UNDERLINES THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT FACTORS RELATING TO POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT. THE AUSTRIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS CONVINCED THAT ONLY A COMBINED PACKAGE FOR WOMEN, INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE AND HEALTH-CARE SERVICES, EDUCATION, THE MEETING OF BASIC NEEDS (WATER, FOOD AND HOUSING) WILL MEET THE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD.

ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE AND INFORMATION ON AND ACCESS TO DIFFERENT EFFECTIVE METHODS OF BIRTH CONTROL STRENGTHEN WOMEN IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

MR. PRESIDENT,

WOMEN HAVE TO BE RECOGNIZED AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE DISCUSSION OF

THESE QUESTIONS.

IN THE NAME OF "POPULATION CONTROL", MUCH HARM HAS BEEN DONE TO WOMEN IN THE PAST IN SOME REGIONS OF THE WORLD. THE AUSTRIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS EXPLICITLY VOICED ITS REJECTION OF FORCED BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMMES. ACCORDING TO OUR UNDERSTANDING, ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON WOMEN TO PRACTICE FAMILY PLANNING IS ALSO A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

AUSTRIA THEREFORE WELCOMES PRINCIPLE 8 OF THE FINAL DOCUMENT WHICH STATES CLEARLY THAT COERCION IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH-CARE PROGRAMMES IS A BREACH OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

THIS CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE DISCUSSION OF THE STATE OF HEALTH OF WOMEN WITH RESPECT TO THEIR REPRODUCTIVE SITUATION. IN MANY REGIONS OF OUR WORLD, WOMEN HAVE LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE CENTERS. HEALTH RISKS FOR WOMEN ARE INCREASED BY PREGNANCY, MALNUTRITION, HARD LABOR AND BY MUTILATING PRACTICES.

THE HEALTH PROBLEM HAS REACHED ALARMING PROPORTIONS. I THEREFORE UNDERLINE THE EFFORTS OF THIS CONFERENCE TO ENSURE WOMEN ACCESS TO HEALTH-CARE SERVICES. THESE SERVICES NEED TO INCLUDE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH-CARE MEASURES. THEY NEED TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE COUNSELING SERVICES IN ORDER TO FIND THE CONTRACEPTIVE METHOD APPROPRIATE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL'S WOMEN'S NEED.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT HAS BROUGHT THE PROBLEM OF MATERNAL MORTALITY TO GLOBAL ATTENTION. AT LEAST HALF A MILLION WOMEN DIE EACH YEAR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH PROBLEMS. AS THE FINAL DOCUMENT STATES, IN SOME COUNTRIES AS MANY AS HALF OF MATERNAL DEATHS ARE PROBABLY THE RESULT OF UNSAFE ABORTIONS.

AUSTRIA EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PROBLEM. WOMEN SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH A LEGAL FRAMEWORK WHICH WOULD ALLOW THEM TO TERMINATE UNWANTED PREGNANCIES WITHOUT RESORT TO DANGEROUS METHODS.

IN THIS CONTEXT, WE UNDERLINE THE NEED FOR WOMEN AND MEN TO GET ADEQUATE INFORMATION ABOUT DIFFERENT METHODS OF FERTILITY CONTROL. ACCESS TO THESE METHODS HAS TO BE AFFORDABLE AND ACCEPTABLE. IT IS ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN WHO NEED TO KNOW HOW TO AVOID UNWANTED PREGNANCIES. FOR YOUNG WOMEN, CHILDBIRTH HAS TO BECOME A MATTER OF CHOICE RATHER THAN OF CHANCE.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IS A POSITIVE PHYSICAL STATE, NOT MERELY THE ABSENCE OF A DISEASE. GOOD REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ALSO IMPLIES KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN SEXUALITY AND THE AVOIDANCE OF HIGH-RISK SEXUAL BEHAVIOR WITH RESPECT TO AIDS.

WOMEN HAVE TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE LIVES THEMSELVES. ALL OVER THE WORLD, WOMEN ARE SEXUALLY HARASSED, RAPED AND BEATEN BY MEN.

EMPOWERING WOMEN MEANS HELPING THEM IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. IT MEANS THAT WOMEN ALSO HAVE THE RIGHT TO A SATISFYING AND SAFE SEX LIFE. IT MEANS THAT WOMEN OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO ENJOY SEXUAL RELATIONS WITHOUT THE FEAR OF VIOLENCE, INFECTION OR UNWANTED PREGNANCY

IT IS IN THIS RESPECT THAT MANY ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THIS CONFERENCE WILL BE TAKEN UP AGAIN BOTH AT THE WORLD SOCIAL SUMMIT AS WELL AS AT THE 4TH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN. IT IS OUR COMMON UNDERSTANDING THAT THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IS THE KEY TO DEVELOPMENT. IT IS THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE GROWTH. IT IS INDISPENSABLE FOR OUR FUTURE.



THIS CONFERENCE CAN BE A MAJOR STEP ON OUR WAY TO GUARANTEE WOMEN AND MEN A LIFE IN DIGNITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION. LET US LIVE UP TO THE ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN THE WORK THAT IS BEFORE US.

THANK YOU.

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