



94-09-07: Statement of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf

ISO: BDG

The electronic preparation of this document has` been done by the
Population Information Network(POPIN) of the United Nations Population
Division in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme

AS WRITTEN

SPEECH OF THE MINISTER

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH

AT THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

CAIRO, SEPTEMBER 5-13, 1994

Honorable Chairperson.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. The Government of Bangladesh is pleased to be represented at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

I would, first of all, like to express gratitude on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh to the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Executive Director of UNFPA, whose dynamism and support made this meeting possible. We are also extremely grateful to the Egyptian Government for the warm hospitality shown to all of us.

2. We come to this Conference to both share with you the success story of the Bangladesh family planning Programme as well as the magnitude and seriousness of the population problem, both for Bangladesh and globally.

3. Honorable Chairperson, Bangladesh is the ninth most populous country in the world. The population of around 112 million people lives in an area of 144,000 sq. km., making Bangladesh the most densely populated country in the world, excepting some island states

4. The population of Bangladesh will increase to around 144 million by the year 2000, and is expected to stabilize at around 240 to 250 million by the year 2025 to 2030. There are serious consequences of this rapid population growth. The land-man ratio continues to decline considerably. The per-capita income remains low. The levels of savings and investment are highly inadequate. There is considerable unemployment and underemployment. There is widespread malnutrition.

5. Honorable Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen: Having touched upon the dismal side of the picture, let me now briefly share with you some of the success of the Bangladesh family planning Programme, a fact

acknowledged the world over. During the last two decades, contraceptive prevalence has increased from less than 8 percent to 45 percent. This has resulted in a sharp fertility decline, with the total fertility rate dropping from over 7 to less than 4. All these have been achieved, despite, as you have already heard, unfavorable socio-economic conditions. It is also important to recognize that all these have been possible within the bounds of the existing social and religious norms; and such norms would continue to guide

6. The government of Bangladesh, however, is aware that there is no room for complacency with whatever success that has already been achieved. We have already identified the key programmatic challenges and the needed priority action areas. We continue to act upon them. Steps taken by the government of Bangladesh demonstrate the high priority accorded to the population welfare sector.

7. Honorable Chairperson: Please permit me to reiterate that the family planning Programme alone cannot ensure sustainable development. What is needed additionally is more accelerated our future population policies as well. development of the other social sectors, covering female education, female employment opportunities, and increased access to primary health care. The government of Bangladesh attaches special importance to gender issues. Thus, empowering women is a major component of our policy to provide a better life for our people. Accordingly, women are being mainstreamed in the development process by pursuing special programmes for female education, female employment, and provision of credit facilities for women. Primary education has been made compulsory, and female education is being vigorously encouraged. We have recently introduced stipend programmes for girls in secondary schools, making Bangladesh the pioneer in this regard.

8. Honorable Chairperson, distinguished participants:

Population explosion, indeed, represents a global threat. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without a proper balancing between human numbers and the resources of the planet.

9. The global population is growing at an alarming rate.

Today, the world population is around 5.5 billion people, and is expected to cross 6 billion by the year 2000. The population of the developing countries is around 4.3 billion people, and will grow to about 5 billion by the year 2000. Presently, over 90 million people are being added annually to the world population, and about 95 percent of this increase takes place in the developing countries. Consequences of the high rate of population growth, unless checked effectively, will be devastating for humanity. Global environment will be threatened by additional demands on scarce land, water, and other non-renewable resources. Therefore, containing the population growth rate is very much a global problem, requiring the commitment of all nations of the world, rich and poor alike. Achieving this would require doubling of the existing resources. This would call for a rational reallocation of the resources at the disposal of the international community.

10. The Government of Bangladesh is quite aware of the rising cost of the programme. Accordingly, various measures are being taken to reduce the overall cost without, however, compromising on quality of care and services. The Government also attaches high priority to sustainability considerations. During the years, the Bangladesh Government's contribution to the health and family planning sector has increased by over ten times, a clear reflection of the high priority given to this sector. In recent years, our resource mobilization has been satisfactory, thus enabling us to make major contributions to all

important social sectors such as education, health, and family welfare. Sustainability of population Programme, in particular, and development Programme, in general, needs to be kept in view. If these programmes are not sustainable, there may even be a backlash. The linkage between demography and democracy should, therefore, be recognized and reflected in our Programme of action.

11. Honorable chairperson, ladies and gentlemen: we have all assembled here to reiterate that human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. Each and every member of mankind has the basic right to a life free from hunger, poverty, ignorance, disease, malnutrition, and fear.

12. However, no one country alone would be able to achieve all these and more. Sustainable development of this planet can only be ensured through the cooperation and commitment of all countries. The richest and the poorest countries of the world are represented here, and we should, therefore, declare our commitment to meet earnestly the challenges that loom large over the planet's horizon. The challenges should, no doubt, be addressed within the bounds of the socio-cultural and religious norms. The Government of Bangladesh wishes to make its position clear. It would not endorse anything emerging from the deliberations of this Conference which is against the tenets of Islam.

13. Like Egypt, cradle of the human civilization in the Nile delta, Bangladesh located in the Ganges delta is bestowed with a rich cultural heritage. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country. We have also important minorities belonging to other religions. Our future initiatives in the population field will continue to be, as they are now, in conformity with our cultural, religious, and traditional values, consistent with our heritage, social norms and customs that guide the

lives of the community in Bangladesh. Keeping this balance, we will do our utmost to strengthen and upscale our programmes.

14 Honorable Chairperson Please permit me to say that the Government of Bangladesh would be willing to share with other countries, especially of the south, the various success and lessons learned from our programmes as well as our modest expertise. This could well be a noble beginning of the South-South collaborative partnership. We believe that the developing countries have great potential of sharing between and among themselves their experiences as well as utilize their technical resources for training, research, etc. under the umbrella of the proposed South-South partnership. We would earnestly request all countries of the North and the international agencies to generously contribute to this process of partnership.

15. It is the common responsibility of all of us to combinedly work toward the solution. Otherwise, the 21st century will be faced with the devastating consequences of population growth. May I, therefore, submit that we all Pledge to work together for our common future, which assures a better life for all of us as well as for the generations to come.

16. Honorable Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: I thank you all for your patience. We all hope that the deliberations here would help guide us in our future policies and actions.

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