



## 94-09-07: Statement of Pakistan, H.E. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto

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ADDRESS BY H.E. MOHTARAMA BENAIZIR

BHUTTO PRIM MINISTER OF PAKISTAN

Bismillah Arrahama Nirraheem

Mr.President,

Secretary General,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies gentlemen,

I come before you as a Woman; as a Mother; and as a Wife.

I come before you as the democratically elected Prime Minister of  
a great Muslim nation -- the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

I come before you as the leader of the ninth largest population on earth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We stand on the cross roads of history.

The choices that we make today will affect the future of mankind. Out of the debris of the second world war arose the impulse to reconstruct the world.

Large communities of people exercised their right of self-determination by establishing nation states of their own.

The challenge of economic development led, in several instances, to group-formation where states subordinated their individual destiny to collective initiatives.

It seemed for a while that these collective efforts would determine the political architecture of the future.

The events of the last few years have, however, made us aware of the growing complexity and contradictions of the human situation.

The end of the cold war, should have freed immense resources for development.

Unfortunately, it led to the re-emergence of sub-regional tensions and conflicts. In extreme cases, there was a break-up of nation states.

Sadly, instead of coming nearer, the objective of a concerted global action to address common problems of mankind, seems lost in the twilight.

The problem of population stabilization faced by us today cannot be divorced from our yesterdays .

Ironically enough, population has risen fastest in areas which were weakened most by the unfortunate experience of colonial domination

The third world communities have scarce resources spread thinly over a vast stretch of pressing human needs.

We are unable to tackle questions of population growth on a scale commensurate with the demographic challenge.

Since demographic pressures, together with migration from disadvantaged areas to affluent states, are urgent problems, transcending national frontiers, it is imperative that in the field of population control, global strategies and national plans work in unison

Perhaps that is a dream. But we all have a right to dream .

Ladies and gentlemen,

I dream of a Pakistan, of an Asia, of a world where every pregnancy is planned, and every child conceived is nurtured, loved, educated and supported

I dream of a Pakistan, of an Asia, of a world not undermined by ethnic divisions brought upon by population growth, starvation, crime and

anarchy.

I dream of a Pakistan, of an Asia, of a world, where we can commit our social resources to the development of human life and not to its destruction.

That dream is far from the reality we endure.

We are a planet in crisis, a planet out of control, a planet moving towards catastrophe. The question before us at this conference is whether we have the will, the energy, the strength to do something about it.

I say we do. We must.

What we need is a global partnership for improving the human condition.

We must concentrate on that which unites us. We should not examine issues that divide us. Our document should seek to promote the objective of planned parenthood of population control.

This conference must not be viewed by the teeming masses of the world as a universal social charter seeking to impose adultery, abortion, sex education and other such matters on individuals, societies and religions which have their own social ethos.

By convening this conference, the international community is reaffirming its resolve that problems of a global nature will be solved through global efforts.

Governments can do a great deal to improve the quality of life in our society.

But there is much that governments cannot do.

Governments do not educate our children. Parents educate children. More often mothers educate children.

Governments do not teach values to our children. Parents teach values to our children. More often mothers teach values to children.

Governments do not socialize youngsters into responsible citizens. Parents are the primary socializing agents in society. In most societies, that job belongs to the mother.

How do we tackle population growth in a country like Pakistan? We tackle it by tackling infant mortality. By providing villages with electrification. By raising an army of women, 33000 strong, to educate our mothers, sisters daughters in child welfare and population control.

By setting up a bank run by women for women, to help women achieve economic independence. And, with economic independence, have the wherewithal to make independent choices.

I am what I am today because of a beloved father who left me independent means, to make independent decisions, free of male prejudice in my society, or even in my family.

As chief executive of one of the nine largest populated countries in the world, I and the Government are faced with the awesome task of

providing for homes, schools, hospitals, sewerage, drainage, food, gas, electricity, employment and infrastructure.

In Pakistan, in a period of 30 years - from 1951 to 1981 - our population rose by 50 million.

At present it is 126 million.

By the year 2020, our population may be 243 million. In 1960 one acre of land sustained one person. today one acre of land sustains 2.1/2 people.

Pakistan cannot progress, if it cannot check its rapid population growth.

Check it we must, for it is not the destiny of the people of Pakistan to live in squalor and poverty condemned to a future of hunger and horror.

That is why, along with the 33000 lady health workers and the women's bank, the government has appointed 12000 community motivaters across the country.

To educate and motivate our people to a higher standard of living through planned families, spaced families, families that can be nurtured.

In our first budget, we demonstrated our commitment to human resource development.

We increased social sector spending by 33%. And by the year 2000 we intend to take Pakistan's educational expenditure from 2.19% where we found it to 3% of our G.N.P.

This is no easy task for a country with a difficult IMF structural programme.

With a ban on economic and military assistance from the only super power in the world.

With 2.4 Million Afghan refugees forgotten by the world.

With more Kashmiri refugees coming in needing protection.

But we are determined to do it. For we have a commitment to our people.

A commitment based on principles.

Such a commitment demands that we take decisions which are right, which are not always popular.

Leaders are elected to lead nations.

Leaders are not elected to let a vocal narrow-minded minority dictate an agenda of backwardness.

We are committed to an agenda for change.

An agenda to take our mothers and our infants into the 21st century with the hope of a better future.

A future free from diseases that rack and ruin.

A future free from polio, from goiter, from blindness caused by deficiency in vitamin A.

These are the battles that we must fight, not only as a nation but as a global community.

These are the battles on which history -- and our people -- will judge us. These are the battles to which the mosque and the church must contribute, along with governments and N.G.Os and families.

Empowerment of women is one part of this battle.

Today women pilots fly planes in Pakistan, women serve as judges in the superior judiciary, women work in police stations, women work in our civil service, our foreign service and our media.

Our working women uphold the Islamic principle that all individuals are equal in the eyes of God.

By empowering our women, we work for our goal of population stabilization and, with it, promotion of human dignity.

But the march of mankind to higher heights is a universal and collective concern.

Regrettably, the conference's document contains serious flaws in striking at the heart of a great many cultural values, in the north and



in the south, in the mosque and in the church.

In Pakistan our response will doubtless be shaped by our belief in the eternal teachings of Islam.

Islam is a dynamic religion committed to human progress. It makes no unfair demands of its followers.

The Holy Quran says:

"Allah wishes you ease, and wishes not hardship for you."

Again the Holy Book says:

"He has chosen you, and has not laid on you any hardship in religion. "

The followers of Islam have no conceptual difficulty in addressing questions of regulating population in the light of available resources.

The only constraint is that the process must be consistent with abiding moral principles.

Islam lays a great deal of stress on the sanctity of life.

The Holy Book tells us:

"Kill not your children on a plea of want.

We provide sustenance for them and for you.

Islam, therefore, except in exceptional circumstances rejects abortion as a method of population control.

there is little compromise on Islam's emphasis on the family unit.

the traditional family is the basic unit on which any society rests.

It is the anchor on which the individual relies as he embarks upon the Journey of Life.

Islam aims at harmonious lives built upon a bedrock of conjugal fidelity and parental responsibility.

Many suspect that the disintegration of the traditional family has contributed to moral decay.

Let me state, categorically, Mr. Chairman, that the traditional family is the union sanctified by marriage.

Muslims, with their over-riding commitment to knowledge would have no difficulty with dissemination of information about reproductive health, so long as its modalities remain compatible with their religious and spiritual heritage.

Lack of all adequate infrastructure of services and not Ideology, constitutes our basic problems.

The major objective of the population policy of the newly elected

democratic government is a commitment to improve the quality of life of the people through provision of family planning and health services.

Mr. Chairman,

We refuse to be daunted by the immensity of the task.

But the goals set by this conference would become realistic only with the whole-hearted cooperation amongst the nations of the world.

Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and Cashmere are but a few reminders of how far we have departed from our principles and ideals".

In many parts of the world we witness the nation-state under siege.

The rise of so-called fundamentalism in some of our societies, and emergence of neo-fascism, in some western communities, are symptoms of a deeper malaise.

I believe the nation states might just have failed to meet their people's expectations within their own limited national resources or ideological framework.

If so, the malady is probably none other than a retreat from the ideals of the Founding Fathers of the United Nations.

We can, perhaps, still restore mankind to vibrant health by returning to those ideals the ideals of Global Cooperation.

Given that background, I hope that the delegates participating in

this conference will act in wisdom, and with vision to promote population stabilization.

Pakistan's delegation will work constructively for the finalization of a document enjoying the widest consensus.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our destiny does not lie in our stars. It lies within us. Our destiny beckons us. Let us have the strength to grasp it.

Thank you, President Mubarak, for hosting this Conference on such an important global concern. And thank you Mr. Secretary General and Dr. Nafis Sadik for making it possible.

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>