



94-09-08: Statement of Mongolia, H.E. Dr. G. Dashzeveg

ISO: MNG

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Speech by Dr. G. Dashzeveg

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Leader of the Mongolian Government Delegation to

the International Conference On Population and Development

Cairo, September 8, 1994

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to represent Mongolian Government at this prominent event and have the chance to express, on behalf of the Government of Mongolia and the Mongolian delegation, my deep gratitude to the United Nations and particularly UNFPA, the Preparatory Committee and the Government of Egypt for organizing this high level and important

international conference and providing us with a wonderful opportunity to attend the conference.

The Government of Mongolia attaches special importance to the International Conference on Population and Development. In preparation to the Conference we convened the first national conference on Population and Development and the second national conference on Safe Motherhood and Family Planning, at which such issues as the interdependence between population and environment, sustained economic and social development were discussed and the findings were used in formulating national development policy and related legal acts. Awareness creation activities to inform the public were also carried out.

Mr. Chairman,

Mongolia, a country with a total population of 2.2 million, is one of the most scarcely populated countries in the World with a population density of 1.4 persons per square kilometer. During the past 20 years we have witnessed many changes in our country's political, economic and social sectors, including the demographics. As a result of the democratic changes and reforms since 1990, Mongolia has moved from a one-party political system to a multi-party parliamentary system. The transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one is in full swing in all sectors of our society. The economic crisis encountered during the transition has adversely affected the health, education and cultural sectors. Decline in living standards and impoverishment of a substantial part of the population has been observed. However, I should state that the liberalization of politics and economy has opened up new and greater opportunities for the people

to improve their lives in the long-run. Our country is moving forward along the road of democracy and economic reforms, and there is no scope for turning back; we are confident that these changes will lay foundation for our future prosperity.

The population indicators of Mongolia have changed similarly to those in most of the developing countries, however there are certain traits characteristic only of Mongolia. The social and culture progress in past 20 years has resulted in intensive urbanization, high female literacy and employment of women which in turn assisted in the decline of the birth rates. The decline of the birth rate has further been compounded by the economic and social changes in the last three years. The rate of population growth in my country in the middle of 1970s was 3,2 but by 1990 it was only 2,0 percent. The total fertility rate dropped from 7 to 3,8, the crude death rate per 1000 people dropped from 10 to 8 and infant mortality per 1000 live births from 70 to 57 respectively in the same time period. The average life expectancy increased by 2,6 years and now it stands at 62 years. However, maternal mortality rate has remained high and it fluctuated from 12 to 22 per 10000 live birth over the past two decades.

The population flow from rural areas to the cities is still prevailing and at present 56 per cent of the country's population live in cities, and settlements, whereas only one fifth are nomadic herders

The Mongolian Government recognizes that creative and able bodied person is the source of the country's economic progress and therefore gives high priority to the population and development issues.

Our Government pays special attention to human rights and freedom, sustained economic and population growth and interdependence between

these issues. Therefore, we strive to reflect the main ideas of the United Nations and other international organizations in our national policy on population and development when dealing with above-mentioned as well as other problems concerning youth, child, women, elderly people, disabled and the families as a whole.

Mongolian Parliament passed a number of important legal acts, which has formed the legal framework for ensuring the human rights and the social security of our people on the basis of the new Mongolian Constitution adopted in 1992. State administrative bodies and mechanisms responsible for elaboration and coordination of population policy have been set up. National Programmes on state population policy, health, education, food, child development, poverty alleviation, struggle against HIV/AIDS have been approved by the Government; initial steps to implement these programmes are being made.

The main thrust of our population policy is directed towards ensuring close coordination between population reproduction and social production, and on that basis to create the most favourable socio-economic, ecological and psychological environment for the human development and towards keeping an appropriate level of population growth rate. Our Government gives high priority to reflecting demographic factors in planning and execution of our development strategies and policies.

The Government is committed to improving maternal and child health, expanding social protection measures, providing all the children with basic education, promoting women's status, supporting families, ensuring living standards of elderly and disabled and providing them with opportunities to active involvement in social life. in this regard,

our Government fully supports the objectives and strategies of the draft Programme of Action of the Conference.

With a view to respect human rights, namely the reproductive right and rights of the families to decide themselves this matter, our population policy had undergone certain changes by the end of the 1980s. While the current population policy supports the increase of births, we pay considerable attention to birth spacing, child bearing age, health of mother and child and decrease of the maternal and infant mortality rate. We have legalized abortion and worked out the National Programme on Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning, implementation of which has started in 1992 in cooperation with UN Population Fund. As a result of legalization of abortion, illegal abortions and consequent ill-effects have decreased substantially. However, the abortion rate has increased and the trend is continuing. Therefore, we now put more efforts towards preventing unwanted pregnancies and assisting women and men in using effective methods of birth control with a view to decrease the number of abortions in future. We hope that the Conference will achieve widely acceptable consensus on the issue of abortions.

We believe that information and training activities aimed at teaching the population healthy living, including reproductive health, sexual behavior, food habits, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and specially AIDS, improvement of the methodology of disseminating this kind of information, and their access should be an integral part of population policy.

Our Government follows a policy to prevent desertation of the remote areas of the country and concentration in the cities in order to maintain a harmonious combination of nomadic and city-dwellers' lifestyles. In order to reach this aim, we pay greater attention to the

development of social services in rural areas.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to tackle a number of pressing issues on population and development it is vital to mobilize the collective efforts of the world community. I believe that the United Nations and the international community will take into account specific conditions in the developing countries and countries that are undergoing critical changes in promoting their cooperation with them and will respect their interests while promoting the advancement of common objectives of the world community.

Using this golden opportunity I would like to express the deep appreciation of our Government to the United Nations for its valuable contribution and assistance which plays an important part in our efforts to solve a number of urgent issues such as the definition and formulation of our population policy, protection of maternal and child health care, improvement of family life, training of national cadres in demography and population sectors, improvement of scientific research in this field.

Today, due to the restricted economic capacity and a number of other constraints and difficulties we are experiencing certain limitations in implementation of our population policy, however, we will mobilize all our resources to achieve the set objectives to improve the living conditions of our people and overcome the obstacles we are facing now.

We believe that the Programme of Action to be adopted by this

Conference will constitute an important document for defining the strategies and policies of Mongolia for the coming years in the field of population and sustained economic development.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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