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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT OF THE VICEPRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA
 HIS EXCELLENCY HUMBERTO DE LA CALLE LOMBANA

CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

CAIRO, SEPTEMBER 5 - 13, 1.994

1.GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM.

The interdependence which characterizes the international system makes co-operation between nations acquire an ever-increasing significance. The future of countries in the social, economic and cultural fields is closely linked to circumstances and decisions which go far beyond the borders of the Nation-State. Individual and collective wellbeing and the future of the population and the sustainable development, depend increasingly on that sophisticated supranational factor network.

Interdependence opens significant spaces to the multilateral system in general and to the United Nations Organization, in particular. Colombia has supported with resolve the United Nations reform process tending to its democratization and the attainment of a better efficiency. The potential and the limits of this aspiration have had as forums several intentional conferences with the widest range of topics: the VIIIth Session of UNCTAD held in Cartagena de Indias in 1991, the Environment and Development Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Human Rights Conference held in Vienna in 1992, and recently concluded Uruguay Round of GATT.

We understand the Cairo Conference as part of this international co-operation effort process in the multilateral scene. Twenty years ago, at the Bucharest Conference, the international community adopted a comprehensive Plan of Action for incorporating the population problem in the Agenda of multilateral co-operation for development. The Plan of Action that will come out from Cairo must meet the complex conditions of the present moment and generate alternatives which enable us to deal with the several aspects of the topic in the future. For this, the implementation of the financial undertakings which the developed world had acquired in the different multilateral forums and those which result from these Conference, oriented to the promotion of a favorable economic

context, an open and non discriminatory commercial system, strengthen of direct foreign investment, the reduction of the foreign debt and the allocation of new and additional financial resources, are key elements on which depend the efficiency of these programmes.

2. THE GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The programme of President Ernesto Samper, - democratically elected by colombians for 1.994-1.998 four year period-, is the framework on which are based Colombia's positions to this Conference. Colombia is about to begin the XXIst Century by facing new economic courses of action within the perspective of social development. On the basis of the attainments reached in the first phase of openness carried out during the preceding four year term, the Colombian Government has undertaken a Great Social Jump which means that economic policy will be carried out with social criteria and social policy will be carried out with gender criteria.

The new Constitution adopted by the Colombian people in 1.991 offers the required political framework for making that will a reality. It assumes political consequences of individual freedom as basis of a society which searches to take advantage of its cultural wealth derived from its increasing heterogeneosness.

Continuing with the efforts for attaining a more competitive penetration of our economy in international markets, Colombia has established as a priority, the improvement of the social distribution of development's benefits. Access of poor families to basic social services and the creation of productive jobs is an essential part of the democratic challenge undertaken by the new administration.

In the context of the economic growth within the framework of the

sustainable development, Colombia has integrated the policies of population and environment. That is clearly reflected in the new Constitution, which precepts have been developed by the Law 99 of 1.993 that created the National Environmental System and the Ministry as the institution responsible of the policies in these matters.

This social strategy grants due attention to the trends in our population's structure and special distribution. Such trends have been discussed in the report which Colombia previously submitted to the Secretariat of the Conference.

Colombia, which now occupies the third place in population in Latin America with 36 million inhabitants, makes significant advances in demographic indicators. Allow me to make a brief reference to the most important of them.

- Regarding demographic changes, our country constitutes a special case in the magnitude and celerity of its transformation. The fertility of 6.8 children per woman in 1.950 was reduced to 2.9 at the beginning of the 90's, keeping high differentials according to educational level, job sharing and rural-urban location. Reduction in fertility rates is associated to significant achievements in education, to the process of urbanization, the enlargement of the basic health services and the broad participation of women in the labor market. There are high level of use of contraceptive methods among women at fertility age. The prevalence rate among women living with a partner is estimated in at 66%.

- The substantial transformation of the population's health conditions during the past 40 years, has been mirrored in a 123 per thousand reduction of child mortality during the period comprised

between 1.950 and 1.955 to 23 in 1.990. Concurrently, deaths of children under one year of age which accounts for 18% of the total in 1.980, went to 8% in 1.991.

- Women's life expectancy has increased from 52 years in the 1.950-1.955 five year period, to 71 years in the 1.985-1.990 period. That of men went from 49 to 65 years during that same period, and has remained virtually steady in the last decade.

- In the last two decades, the population's access to all level of formal education has been expanded, particularly in the case of women, to the extent that secondary education enrollment rate is similar in both sexes. The achievements acquired by our country with regard to gender equity in the university educational field is reflected in a very significant indicator: 52% of the students registered at the universities nowadays in Colombia are women. Female's illiteracy was reduced from 25% in 1.963 to 12% in 1.991.

The new Administration's social strategy depends to a large extent on its consequences in youths and in particular in young women. Not only because they account for a very significant percentage of our population, but because their individual history are the major factor of demographic trends. To improve the quality of life in the long run requires to guarantee education, health and job opportunities which will enable young women to train themselves in order to fully assume their own history.

That is why Colombia had defined a policy of participation and equity for women, as a priority to guide the governmental action that allows to integrate her high potential to development.

International migrations constitutes one of the global agenda's major topics. They test the solidarity between receiving countries and migration sending ones. Aware of the domestic migratory reality qualified and non-qualified migration, the Colombian Government submitted in due time to the National Congress the Project for the ratification of the December 1.990 United Nations Convention. This law was passed by the Congress and is being reviewed by the Constitutional Court for the duties incumbent upon it.

May this be the opportunity for underlying the importance of the initiative which within the framework of Latin America and the Caribbean Preparatory Committee suggested by the Economic Commission for Latin America, ECLA, emphasised the pertinence of opening the discussion about the possibility of reaching global and regional agreements of labor mobilization. Within the context of the globalisation process the world should not be confined to suppress the barriers for the free movement of capital and technology. They must meet also the mobilization of persons taking into account the situation of the labor markers, as well as their consequences on the whole macroeconomic process.

3. POPULATION AS A MULTILATERAL TOPIC.

Aware both of the global interdependence as well as of domestic social priorities, Colombia is optimistic regarding the benefits which international co-operation generates for the developing world in a conference which like this one gathers us today.

The Bucharest (1974) and Mexico (1984) Conferences have enabled the international community to accumulate two decades of experience on the potential and the limitations of multilateral action in this field. This

Conference must reiterate the basic perspective adopted since then: population trends are an integral part of socioeconomic development policies, and in no case a substitute for them.

Colombia took an active part in the drafting of the Regional Plan of Action in Population and Development, adopted by the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean at Cartagena de Indias last April. The diagnosis and programatic contents of this Regional Plan is consistent with the guidelines of the World Action Programme's draft which this Conference considers.

The preparatory process has produced several degrees of agreement on the wide and various topics encompassed by the World Programme. Just like in any multilateral forum aspiring to consensus, the final product cannot fully mirror individual interests or perspectives, but a common ground which guides collective action. Important consensual agreements have been reached around topics such as population policies, integration of economic and environmental strategies agreed upon in specialized multilateral forums, an assesment of trends in the world population's growth and structure, women's promotion, mortality reduction, the family's protection and support as the basis of society, greater care to domestic and international migrations, improvement of family planning as an element of health services, and institutional mechanisms for the Programme of Action's proper implementation and follow-up.

The major task which we have before us are the specific topics in which no consensus has been reached. We cannot expect that at this stage of the negotiation process, the reiteration of controversial positions can have productive effects. It seems- reasonable, especially on those specific topics in which delegations are unable to reach an agreement, that the common denominator consists of explicitly acknowledging the

respect for each country's laws and sovereign policies. In these circumstances, our citizens' interests will be better served by reiterating their right to decide as a nation on controversial topics, without failing to take into account the goals of this Conference, the undertakings assumed by States and the topic's interdependence.

Divergence usually produces more news than convergence. But, faced to the agreements already attained, it is realistic to think that when this Conference ends, the millions of families which live in the developing world will have well-founded reasons for believing in a better world.

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