



94-09-09: Statement of Myanmar, H.E. Lt. General Mya Thin

ISO: MMR

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Text of Speech delivered by His Excellency Lt. General Mya Thin,
Minister for Home Affairs and Leader of the Myanmar Delegation To the
International Conference on Population and
Development Cairo, Egypt, 5-13 September 1994.

Text of Speech delivered by His Excellency Lt. General Mya Thin and
Leader of the Myanmar Delegation to the International Conference on
Population and Development, Cairo, Egypt, 9-13, September 1994.

Honourable Chairman, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Myanmar delegation, allow me to extend to you and
the Vice-chairmen of the International Conference on Population and

Development our heartiest congratulations on your election to the high offices of this important Conference. I would also like to congratulate the National Organizing Committee and the Secretariat on the excellent organization of the Conference. May I express my heartfelt thanks to the Government and people of Egypt for their warm hospitality.

Mr. Chairman,

This Conference with the theme "Population, Sustained economic growth and sustainable development" is both pertinent and timely as it not only provides us the opportunity to critically review the progress that we had made since the last conference, but more importantly, it enables us to formulate new programmes and strategies in responding to the new challenges.

It is well recognized that there are many linkages between population and development. Population is an issue of great importance for the world today. However, each country has its own problems of primary importance to deal with, due to its own specific social and economic situations. We maintain that it is for the government of each country to decide its own strategy, policy and measures concerning populations social, and economic development in accordance with its own specific conditions. Myanmar recognizes the inter-relationship between population, environment and development, and accordingly, the national development policy, plans and programmes will be based on an integrated approach which acknowledges this relationship.

Regarding demographic statistics, the population censuses are the main source in Myanmar. First of all, allow me to narrate briefly the history of Census. Myanmar has a fairly long tradition of population

counting system. The first modern census was taken in 1872 and thereafter every ten years starting from 1881 to 1941. after the Second World War, attempt was made to conduct the census in stages in 1953 and 1954 but only urban areas and rural areas near the towns were covered because of security conditions prevailing at the time. The nationwide census could only be taken in 1973 and 1983 as a mass movement with the enthusiastic and active participation of the entire working people of the country. The 1990 round of census, due in 1993 was postponed as the country was preoccupied with the National Convention held for reaching a consensus on drafting a New Constitution.

Another source of data is vital statistics. Vital statistics is collected by the Department of Health and the reports compiled and published by Central Statistical Organization. The vital registration system covered about almost all of the total urban population and about 60 percent of the total rural population.

The population was counted as 16 million in 1941 and in 1983 census it came to 35.3 million. It showed that the population has more than doubled in 42 years. The current population is estimated as 43.1 million and if the growth rate persists at the present level it is expected that at the turn of this century the population will be 49.1 million and 68.5 million in the year 2020. The population density of Myanmar is 165 persons per square mile and has a favourable living space compared to neighbouring countries. The Total Fertility Rate is 3.6 in 1990 and the Expectation of life at birth for both sexes estimated as 60.4 years.

Mr. Chairman,

The government attaches priority to human development. The

important aim is to increase public expenditure on health and education. The main objective of the National Health Policy is to raise the level of the health of the country and promote the physical and mental well-being of the people with the aim of reaching the goal of "Health for all by the year 2000" using primary health care approach. The national health plan is being drawn up with the aim of serving the population in the field of public health, prevention of diseases, and eradication of epidemic. Priority is being given to primary health care with the cooperation of the government departments, social organizations and with the active participation of health conscious people.

In the education sector new facilities are being created, existing facilities renovated and upgraded, more financial provisions made in the budget in order that the students can have high aspirations and acquire a well-rounded education capable of equipping them to be prepared for what the future demands. Curriculum development and teacher training are important objectives. Technical education and vocational training are being emphasized to provide the manpower for an expanding industrial sector.

Myanmar Women have always enjoyed equal status with men and have participated as equal partner in business activities as well as in national development affairs. At the same time raising the status of women by improving their education, health, living and working conditions and greater opportunity for meaningful employment would contribute to the decline of fertility.

Myanmar fully realizes that rapid population growth is an obstacle to social and economic development and putting pressure on the national resources of the developing countries, At the same time the government

attempts to improve the general health of the population, and in particular, women and children have access to a full range of essential and appropriate health services and programmes. Such services of birth spacing are being implemented in 25 townships with the assistance of United Nations Population Fund and the Family planning International Assistance. Plans are also being made to extend the birth spacing services to another 52 townships over the next three years.

In an effort to implement the social and economic development in the country, special emphasis is being given to the development of the national races in the border areas. More schools have been opened and station hospitals and primary health centers established. To enable smooth transport and communication, roads and bridges are being built and existing ones upgraded. Hydro power stations are built to bring electricity to the less advanced border areas. Agriculture and livestock breeding centers had been established and modern techniques are being imparted to the local farmers. The government has already spent almost two billion kyats for the economic and social development of national races in the border areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar is very much aware of the world's last pressing environment problems, including global warming and ecological degeneration, and general deterioration in the quality of life of the population. A National Commission for Environmental Affairs has already been constituted with proper authority and is coordinating with various ministries and departments on environmental matters. At a time where the estimated rate of Global degeneration is substantially high, about 50 percent of the total areas in our country is still covered by green forest. Myanmar is taking great effort in launching Programme of

reforestation and greening the arid areas in nine districts of the country.

As a developing country, Myanmar need the assistance, cooperation and encouragement of the international agencies, in the field of data collection and population research for policy formulation and programme implementation. We stress the need to promote the expansion of dialogue and exchange experiences in population and development issues on bilateral as well as multilateral basis.

Mr. Chairman

In conclusion I would like to express once again our heartfelt thanks to the Government of Arab Republic of Egypt and the ICPD secretariat for organizing Interntional Conference on Population and Development. We truly believe that we would certainly benefit a great deal from the deliberations of this conference, and we look forward to the emergence of a consensus on the draft programme of Action. We are hopeful that it will contribute toward a significant improvement in the overall quality of life of the present and future generations.

Thank You.

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