



## 94-09-09: Statement of Nepal, H.E. Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat

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AS WRITTEN

NEPAL

STATEMENT BY

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HON. VICE-CHAIRMAN,

NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

AND

LEADER OF THE NEPALESE DELEGATION

TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

September 9, 1994, Cairo, Egypt

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and  
Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak on behalf of the Nepalese Delegation and on my own to his unanimous election to the chair of this important conference. Under his able leadership and guidance we are confident that the conference with its overall theme of population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, will be able to achieve its goal. We would like to assure His Excellency of our fullest cooperation to this effect.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Nafis Sadik, Secretary-General of the Conference, for her untiring effort in organizing this conference. We would also like to thank the Preparatory Committee for their undiminished endurance towards the preparation of the conference. Our deep appreciation goes to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting this global Conference, and also for the excellent arrangement and warm hospitality extended to us.

Mr. President, Nepal attaches great importance to this International Conference on Population and Development as a continuation and consolidation of efforts initiated in 1974 Bucharest Conference and followed by the 1984 Mexico Global population conference. We consider this conference an important milestone having a far-reaching consequence to nations and peoples of the contemporary world as well as future generation.

Of the approximately 5.7 billion people presently on earth, over a billion live under dire poverty. Global income distribution is worsening, and global environmental health is increasingly becoming a matter of great concern.

Growing at the rate of over 90 million per year, the global population growth presents formidable obstacles to international efforts towards alleviating poverty, protecting the environment and achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Since both abject poverty and wasteful consumption patterns are incompatible with sustained economic growth and other development efforts, issues of population, poverty, production and consumption pattern should be examined holistically on a global basis. However, there is some reason to be optimistic. Most countries have adopted population policies and programmes as an integral part of their national development strategy. However, it is a matter of concern, as His Excellency Jan Pronk pointed out yesterday that the much needed adjustment in the consumption and production patterns in some parts of the world continues to be postponed.

Mr. President, Nepal is one of the least developed countries of the world. Being a landlocked nation, with a predominance of agriculture and little industrialization we face severe economic constraints. Nearly half of our countrymen and women are living below the poverty line.

Rapid population growth has largely undermined the gains from our development efforts. Population growth has also disturbed Nepal's fragile mountain ecological balance. Keeping this in view, poverty alleviation, population stabilization and environmental protection are the main goals of the government in Nepal.

Mr. President, Nepal's population policies are formulated with both demographic and developmental considerations. The main objective of the current population policy is to strike a balance between population growth, socio-economic development and environmental protection, to fulfill the basic human needs of our people. The basic strategy of our

population policy is to create conditions that foster a smaller family norm. The implementation of the strategies and programmes related to the integration of population and development is expected to bring down the total fertility rate from 5.7 at present to 4.0 by the turn of this century.

The National health programme implemented so far, has had positive impact on the health and welfare of mothers and children. As a result, the infant mortality rate and the maternal mortality rate have been showing downward trends and the life expectancy is increasing. Within the context of the health sector, family planning has received considerable emphasis over the last 25 years. Trends in contraceptive prevalence have continued to rise and are currently over 25%.

Despite our continued efforts to reduce the population growth rate and the total fertility rate, they still remain very high. To achieve our development and demographic goals, we have strengthened our multi-sectoral approach and extended activities to the grassroots level. Primary health care, safe motherhood, reproductive health including family planning and population education will influence fertility and population growth. Much of our national development efforts in poverty alleviation, education, health, agriculture, housing and so on will further contribute to our demographic objectives.

Nepal is cognizant of the fact that success of its population and socio-economic development programmes hinges on the full and meaningful participation of women. For this reason, Nepal attaches great importance to the empowerment of women. Various constitutional and legal provisions have been made to raise the status of women. These provisions include mandatory participation of women by each political

party in the parliamentary process. Furthermore, special efforts to extend education, health, and employment opportunities to women are being implemented.

The current development approach of Nepal includes a number of institutional reforms to facilitate programme implementation, improve the absorptive capacity of line agencies, strengthen coordinating and monitoring mechanisms and increase the role of NGOs, the private sector and the community in population related activities.

Mr. President, the Government of Nepal is fully committed to even more effective implementation of a comprehensive population and family planning programme. To achieve the policy objective of balancing population and development, the Government of Nepal is already allocating in excess of 25% of its total budget to the social sectors which is more than the amount recommended in the ICPD programme of action. However, this amount falls far short of what is required on a per capita basis. The Government of Nepal will therefore need additional resources to translate the over policy objective into a reality.

With increased assistance from the international community, empowerment of women, a grassroot focus, and effective partnership with private sector and NGOs, we are greatly optimistic to be able to stabilize population growth, protect ( )our fragile environment and be firmly on the path of sustainable development in the 20 year time span envisioned in the programme of action.

Nepal recognizes that choice of appropriate population policies and programmes based on their country conditions are the prerogative of each sovereign nation. Nevertheless, we believe the draft programme

of action presently under consideration by the conference, provides a sound basis for arriving at a global consensus for- balancing population and global resources for this and future generations.

Thank you.

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