



## 94-09-09: Statement of Russia, H.E. Mr. Gennadii G. Melikyan

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AS WRITTEN

ADDRESS by Mr. G.Melikyan, minister of Labour of the Russian Federation,  
Head of the delegation of the Russian Federation to the International  
Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 5-13, 1994)

Distinguished Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me first of all, - Mr. Chairman, to join congratulations on  
account of Your election to this high office. Allow me to congratulate  
other members of the General Committee as well. By now one can mark the  
historic character of the Cairo Conference and we are convinced that  
under the able guidance of the General Committee the Conference will  
fulfill its tasks. I would like to express our sincere gratitude to H.E.

President and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the benevolence and great efforts in the Conference's organization and also give high praise to Dr. Nafis Sadik for her exceptional contribution to the Conference's success.

1. Only ten years have passed since the Conference in Mexico City but these years were so much overfilled with great historic events and changes that we can say without hesitation: we live now in another world, drastically different from "black and white" colours of the Cold War era.

The world has changed, it has become more secure from the point of view of global confrontation and the threat of nuclear war. But at the same time problems that have long been considered "secondary" in relation to the key question of survival of humanity are advancing to the forefront. Among them: environment, social tensions and indisputably, population and development. Without adequate attention to their solution both on the part of every country and the whole world community at large not only health and welfare of now living people, but also dignified life of future generations will be in jeopardy.

However, we don't share those pessimistic appraisals that speak of the world's movement towards a catastrophe, one of such appraisals was expressed in a striking speech during the Conference. We consider, that full comprehension of the problems and a political will to solve them are the earnest of discovering both at the level of a state and the international level new responses to the vital problems and establishing mechanisms of getting over current difficulties.

We believe that the Cairo Conference is called upon to play the most

important role in this process and will make its contribution to elaboration of a new global concept of development while concentrating on the key issues of interrelation between the population, stable economic growth and sustainable development, and on issues of national efforts and international cooperation mechanisms in this area.

2. Russia generally accepts the approach outlined in the preamble and the principles of the Draft programme of action.

In particular, we share anxiety concerning the rapid world's population growth, which is very much depleting the resources of our planet and aggravating economic and social problems both of the countries which are facing this growth and the world community as a whole. Hence we stem from the fact that countries with the rapid population growth will find the prompt answer of their own to this challenge of time, leaning upon the experience, accumulated by the mankind.

We hope, that every country, while respecting its historical traditions will be able to find reasonable limits of combination of these traditions and the new realities, arising from economic, demographic and social modernization. All the countries were characterized in the past by high mortality and if we managed to overcome it, it might be quiet reasonable to change our attitude towards the other sides of the demographic reality, in particular, towards the tradition of high fertility. We realize, that the national priorities of different countries in this issue can vary substantially.

For example, for Russia and some other developed countries in which fertility now is below the replacement level, the problem of population dynamics and reproductive behaviour of families rather differs from the same problems of some African, Asian and Latin American states.

Accordingly, the Programme cannot contain universal remedies. Each country should be enabled to choose from the offered variety of remedies those that are suitable to it and don't contradict its national priorities in the field of development.

3. The issue of reproductive rights, in particular that of abortion, turned out to be one of the key problems at our Conference. We proceed from the fact that the reproductive rights are the constituent part of general system of the human rights.

In this connection we share the view that all married couples and individuals should have the right to make decisions concerning the number of their children and the intervals between the births freely and with full responsibility. Of course, working out and putting into practice the policy of population' regulation is the sovereign right of any country. At the same time--we believe, that such policy should be realized without resorting to any forms of compulsion and without suppression of family and individual rights.

4. Concerning abortions - quiet sore subject for Russia - I want to draw your attention to the following.

In Russia abortions are legally permitted. At the same time a reduction of abortion number and minimizing the heavy dependency on abortion as one of the methods of fertility regulation are in our opinion not only highly important medical, but also a social goal and a potential for considerable improvements in the population health. We proceed from the fact that induced abortions exert a very negative impact on the health of women and children, and we welcome the substitution of induced abortion for alternative methods of fertility regulation. It's important

that every pregnancy should be intended and every child - desired.

At the same time, while respecting national peculiarities and recognizing the diversity of the world we consider, that imposing a ban on induced abortions can't solve existing problems. And what is more they can redouble them.

5. The national report on Russia population problem was circulated at the Conference. It exempts me from necessity to dwell on demographic situation inside the country. At the same time I would like to note that for the period after the Mexico Conference Russia has faced radical transformations changing economic, political and social environment, within the limits of which everyday life of families and all demographic process are running. Among these changes a special note should be taken for the following:

- rejection of strict centralization of political power, democratization of society, essential expansion of the role and rights of the regions;

- transition to market economy;

- rejection of monopoly and paternalistic role of state as the only subject of adopting all decisions concerning population policy and resources distribution;

- development of non-governmental organizations influencing determination of goals and priorities of population policy;

- liberalization of legislation which concerns internal and external migration, bringing this legislation into accord with the international regulations;

- grossing openness of Russia in regard to the international community.

These and many other changes have not finalised yet, new institutional forms are only taking their shapes. People adaptation to new conditions of life in many cases is proceeding in complicated and painful way. All this often unfavourably affects demographic processes, aggravates negative phenomena in population sphere which became apparent during the previous periods.

In these conditions different measures aiming at demographic situation improving are being undertaken. Elaboration of a new demographic concept, which will take into account results of our Conference as well as the previous regional conferences, is to be completed soon. For the first time in our country such programmes, as programme for family planning, programme "Children of Russia" have been adopted. Corresponding services are forming on national and regional levels. Participation of different non-governmental organizations in solving of the mentioned problems is broadening.

However, improvement of demographic situation in many respects is connected with the stabilization of the economy, some signs of which began to appear in our country during the last period.

6. Recognizing the priority of the national efforts in the elaboration and implementation of population policy and the attainment of the goals of the Programme of Action in the population area, we believe that in the context of increasing interdependence of States in the modern world international cooperation has an important role to play. In our opinion the key role should be played by the United Nations. At the same time we

attach great importance to the enhanced participation of the international financial institutions in solving population problems.

The search for an optimal mechanism for such cooperation is of great importance.

Taking into account the acuteness of the demographic situation in Russia we - are interested in developing international cooperation in the population area, in receiving technical assistance from international organizations and donor countries.

7. In order to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Cairo Conference recommendations it is necessary to disseminate information about the Programme of Action, to establish national mechanisms for the implementation of the Conference decisions, as well as to create a system to monitor the realization of the Conference targets.

In conclusion let me express hope that while working out the final document of the Conference we shall manifest tolerance, trying to understand each other. Only then the Programme of Action will let every country realize its sovereign right to choose the measures which seem to be most effective and most appropriate for its development programme, its national peculiarities and possibilities.

Thank you.