

E T H I O P I A

**Statement
by**

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at

THE HAGUE FORUM

(ICPD + 5)

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The Hague, The Netherlands

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me and my delegation to be present at the Hague Forum organized to assess progress and constraints in the implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD in the past five years.

Let me start by reiterating that sustainable development is diverse and applied from various strands of development. Whatever the mode of application there is concurrence among the international community that integrating population and development strategies will speed up the pace of sustainable development and contribute to the achievement of population objectives and enhance the quality of life of the population. This is the cardinal principle upon which our population programme is based.

The National Population Policy recognizes that the rate of growth of the population is one of the factors which influence and impinge upon the long term development process. This recognition is premised upon the conviction that the interaction between demographic factors and socio-economic variables determine the direction and pace of economic and social change.

The main goal of the population Policy is the harmonization of the rate of population growth and the capacity of the country for the development and rational utilization of natural resources so that the level of welfare of the population is maximized overtime.

It is perhaps imperative to mention at this point the structural changes that took place in Ethiopia since 1991.

Economic reform in Ethiopia is taking place under complex and difficult circumstances. The economy had to be jump-started with emergency reconstruction and rehabilitation. A state dominated command economy is being replaced by a market driven economy based on private enterprise, and a process of political transformation grounded on democratization and devolution of power is being undertaken. Soon after issuing the New Economic Policy in November 1991, the Government initiated economic reform subsequently concretized into a stabilization and adjustment programme.

The results of the programme have been quite encouraging. Substantial progress has been made in removing price distortions which characterized the economy while at the same time keeping the economy established. This had required a determined tightening of fiscal and monetary policies, as well as lifting a host of restrictions and regulations which had stifled market forces and private initiatives. The prevalence of peace and stability for the first time in nearly two decades, together with liberalization enabled a quick economic upturn.

The Government has continued deepening of the reform process particularly in terms of liberalization and privatization. At the same time to prepare the ground for future growth of the economy, we have prepared a long-term development strategy oriented towards agricultural-development-led industrialization (ADLI). ADLI will use agriculture as the spring-board for the development of other sectors. It is envisaged that the private sector will play the leading role in economic activity. The role of the government will be essentially to provide social services and economic infrastructure.

It may be time consuming to provide accounts of the other national development policies adopted by the government in the past five years. It is suffice to mention that among the policies are the National Population Policy (April 1993), the National Policy on Women (Sept., 1993), the Health Policy (Sept.1993) the Education and Training Policy (April 1994) and the Environment Policy (April 1997). The policies and the programmes that have emanated from the policies are aimed at improving the general well being of the Ethiopian people. It is our belief that all these measures have placed the country in a better position than ever before to tackle the prevailing socio-economic problems.

On the basis of the above policies, sector development programmes have been formulated and are being implemented. These include food security, education, health, road and of course population. The policies and programmes formulated in the above areas exhibit strong inter-sectoral linkages and are mutually supportive. Experience has shown that what we do in health and education especially for women impacts positively on demographic variables.

It is also important to note that the nature of government expenditure has seen major changes in line with the shift in the country's economic policy and strategy. The resource allocated to small holder agriculture, roads, education, health and water has seen quite significant increases since 1991.

Besides facing the daunting task of recovering from war and instituting conducive environment for stimulating economic and social development, one cannot fail to note the important new political measures taken for creating a conducive framework for participatory development. That is instituting federal government and regional states through devolution of power. Each regional state has legislative, Judiciary and executive power.

The primary objective of the devolution process is to bring about participatory development to ensure that not only that fruits of development are equitably distributed in the country, but that people, especially those at the regional, district and community levels are given the democratic and political rights and mechanism to participate in the determination of their own destiny.

Just as in other sectors this process has created suitable conditions for population policy and

programmes. Regional population offices have been established which facilitated and enhanced the participation of the people at the community levels both in the formulation and implantation of population programmes.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

Reproductive health as defined in the programme of action of ICPD is broad and covers many components. It is unlikely that all components can be implemented simultaneously. We have therefore selected important focus areas on the basis of our concerns.

Interventions to improve the reproductive health of women, men and adolescents are key elements of ICPD - PA and the National Population Policy of Ethiopia. Unlike the days before the adoption of the population policy when family planning programmes concentrate on married women alone, the Reproductive health programme now seeks to meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents as well. As in most of developing countries these segment of the population is victim of early child bearing, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion.

We acknowledge that male involvement in Reproductive health including family planning is of crucial importance if the policy objectives have to be realized as planned. In this line efforts are now being made to reach men especially industrial workers at places of work.

The health service coverage in Ethiopia is only about 50 percent of the population. Consequently reproductive health services under clinical settings fall short of the demand for the services. This is especially true in the rural areas where people have to travel long distances to the clinics. To overcome this problem alternative systems such as community based distributions and social marketing are being promoted.

The expansion and provision of reproductive health services depends on the availability of skilled human resources. Hence investing in human resource development was one of the major undertakings in the last few years. A number of health workers at federal and state levels have been training on clinical skills, reproductive health/IEC, programme management and logistics. Furthermore the curricula of training of health workers including that of medical schools have been reviewed to suit the realities that exist at present.

Advocacy and IEC have also received attention in the country's development programmes including implementation of population programme. The government has prepared a National IEC and advocacy strategy within the National Population Policy framework. It is our belief that it provides an essential blue print for actual population and development interventions including reproductive health.

The integration of population and family life education at the relevant levels of Education is one of our successful undertakings. Relevant reference materials have also been prepared and disseminated. The beneficiaries include students at the secondary level of Education, Agricultural Colleges and teacher training institutes.

Dissemination of population information utilizes all the available channels of communication to reach the majority of the population. A variety of population/IEC multi-media programmes and materials were prepared and disseminated through radio, television and the press. Posters, newsletters, magazines and monographs carried messages that promote awareness and knowledge among the population.

Since the adoption of the National population Policy, there is increasing recognition of the need to utilize demographic data and research results in planning. To this effect the government had allocated over 20

million USD for the second National Population and Housing Census of 1994. The demographic and other socio-economic data generated are presented in such a way that they satisfy present and future needs of sectoral and macro planning. Research results are also being disseminated widely to users. In addition, long term and in-service training have been provided in order to build up the analytical capabilities of professionals engaged in the implementation of population programmes.

Ethiopia acknowledges that the full and equal participation of women is a key element of successful population and development programmes. Our health, educate and population policies as well as the women's policy have an aim improving the quality of life of Ethiopian women. Our constitution has substantial provisions that specifically treat the political economic and social rights of women. To this effect a number of activities geared towards gender equity and equality have been undertaken. The activities include sensitizing the public, policy and decision makers about gender in general and women's health and education in particular.

There are different organizations involved in the implementation of population programmes in the country. Federal and regional agencies are major actors in the implementation process.

This does not in any way mean that only the public sector is involved in the implementation of population programmes. Non-government organizations and the private sector assist government efforts in population and related activities. The Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia in particular took the leading role in expanding reproductive health services to the public in general and adolescents in particular. It is important to mention that other NGOs have started reproductive health services in the last two or three years. These non-government organizations and many others have formed a consortium of family planning NGOs and in unison are offering commendable services and are building National capacity through training of health professional at different levels.

The involvement of the civil society including religious leaders is also actively sought to assist in population programme implementation particularly reproductive health.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

It was not without difficulties that the programme of action for the implementation of the National population policy have been implemented. These problems emanate from the general low level of socio-economic development which is manifested in terms of insufficient trained personnel and financial constraint. The major constraints observed certainly limit the scope and pace of implementation of population programmes at any given time.

Despite these problems the implementation of population programmes of Ethiopia can be said to have shown good performance. It is our belief that experiences gathered in the past will certainly help to accelerate the pace of implementation in the future. It should also be noted that the policies and programmes being implemented in food security, education, health and women instituted by the Government over the years have not only helped to promote socio-economic development, but have also laid down a firm foundation for the realization of the National Population Policy objectives overtime.

Mr. Chairman!

Allow me to make one last observation. I would like to stress that the World Community not short of blue prints and programme of actions. What we are short of is their implementation because what the different parties promised are not delivered in time.

The future, therefore, depends on meeting the promises that have been made by different parties to the

realization of ICPD-PA. Anything short of the promises will ultimately affect the implementation process and contribute to slow the realization of poverty eradication to which the World Community has committed itself in a number of international fora in the 1990s, which is already made difficult by the acute financial crisis of the 1998.

Thank You!