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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Cairo, Egypt

5-13 September 1994

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

ICPD Secretariat, 220 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: (212) 297-5244 or 5245; Fax: (212) 297-5250

Press inquiries: (212) 297-5023, 297-5030 or 297-5279

E-mail: ryanw@unfpa.org



CAIRO CONFERENCE MAPS OUT `PATH TO A BETTER REALITY'

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CAIRO CONFERENCE MAPS OUT `PATH TO A BETTER REALITY'

CAIRO--The Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development "starts from the reality of the world we live in and shows us the path to a better reality", Dr. Nafis Sadik, Secretary-General of the Conference, told delegates at the closing session on 13 September. "This Programme of Action," she stated, "has the potential to change the world."

Delegations from 179 States (plus 7 observers) took part in eight days of painstaking negotiations to finalize the Programme. Adopting the spirit of "rigour, tolerance and conscience" called for by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his opening address to the Conference on 5 September, they reached a number of crucial compromises.

The resulting 16-chapter document, adopted at the final

session, strongly endorses a new strategy for addressing population issues, one that emphasizes the numerous linkages between population and development and focuses on meeting the needs of individual women and men rather than on achieving demographic targets.

Key to this new approach is empowering women and providing them with more choices through expanded access to education and health services and promoting skill development and employment. The 20-year Programme of Action advocates making family planning universally available by 2015 or sooner as part of a broadened approach to reproductive health and rights, provides estimates of the required levels of national resources and international assistance, and calls on Governments to make these resources available.

The Programme of Action also includes goals in regard to education, especially for girls, and for the further reduction of infant, child and maternal mortality levels. It also addresses issues relating to population, the environment and consumption patterns; the family; internal and international migration; prevention and control of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; information, education and communication; and technology, research and development. And it calls, for the first time, on Governments to address unsafe abortion as a leading cause of maternal mortality and a "major public health concern".

The urgency of linking population and development efforts was a common theme running through the 249 speeches made in the week-long plenary session which paralleled the negotiations.

The Conference had 10,757 registered participants--from Governments, intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and the news media--and received an unprecedented level of press coverage. In addition, nearly 4,000 people attended the NGO Forum '94, an independent gathering held alongside the Conference.

OPENING SESSION

Dr. Sadik opened the Conference, at the Cairo International Conference Centre, at 9:30 a.m. on 5 September. Delegates quickly approved a number of organizational and procedural issues which had been addressed in pre-conference consultations on 3 and 4 September. These included the rules of procedure, organization of work including establishment of the Main Committee, appointment of the Credentials Committee, and accreditation of additional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs.

After a brief suspension, the meeting was reconvened by Mr. Boutros-Ghali who then addressed the plenary. He called ICPD a "turning point" in addressing poverty, development, the environment, the status of women, the conditions in which children are growing up, public health, and other issues linked with people's welfare.

"I am not exaggerating when I say that not only does the future of human society depend on your Conference but also the efficacy of the economic order of the planet on which we live," he declared. Delegates must be "highly respectful of cultures and beliefs", he said. "Such tolerance must be shown in the strongest possible way, for it should not lead to cautious compromises,

half-measures, vague solutions or, still worse, statements that lull us into complacency."

President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, was then elected President of the Conference and addressed the plenary. He expressed the hope that ICPD would serve as a bridge between North, South, East and West, and be guided by a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility, balancing spiritual and material needs.

After welcoming remarks by Dr. Sadik, the morning plenary then heard speeches from Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, Vice President Albert Gore of the United States, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, and Prince Mbilini, the Prime Minister of Swaziland.

"This conference is really about the future of democracy, how we widen and deepen its forces and scope," Dr. Brundtland declared. "Unless we empower our people, educate them, care for their health, allow them to enter economic life, on an equal basis and rich in opportunity, poverty will persist, ignorance will be pandemic and people's needs will suffocate under their numbers. ...

"When we adopt the Programme of Action," she pledged, "we sign a promise -- a promise to allocate more resources next year than we did this year to health-care systems, to education, family planning and the struggle against AIDS."

"Equitable and sustainable development and population stabilization go together," Mr. Gore argued. "The education and empowerment of women, high levels of literacy, the availability of

contraception and quality health care: these factors are all crucial. They cannot be put off until development takes place; they must accompany it -- and indeed should be seen as part of the process by which development is hastened and made more likely."

"What we need," Ms. Bhutto stressed, "is a global partnership for improving the human condition. ... By empowering our women, we work for our goal of population stabilization and, with it, promotion of human dignity."

The Conference then elected as its Vice-Presidents Brazil, Mexico, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Malta, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Zambia, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Hungary, Romania, and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Dr. Maher Mahran, Minister of Population and Family Welfare of Egypt, was designated Vice-Chairman ex officio of the Conference. Dr. Fred Sai of Ghana was elected Chairman of the Main Committee.

In the 5 September afternoon plenary, Dr. Sadik delivered her major statement. She reviewed the progress made since the World Population Conference of 1974 in providing family planning services world-wide. Regarding the current Programme of Action, she emphasized that "the principle of sovereignty underlies the whole text". Citing the controversy that had arisen around references to abortion, she pointed out that "the objective is to reduce the need for abortion" and to reduce the hundreds of maternal deaths that now occur daily due to unsafe abortion, through strengthened family planning and reproductive health programmes. "Each nation will

address the issue according to its own laws and practice. Surely, in the name of humanity, it must be done."

"The language of the document is so framed as to be acceptable to the widest spectrum of approaches to population," she said, promising that every effort would be made to find "phrasing acceptable to all" on issues such as the role and function of the family.

At the same time, Dr. Sadik stressed the need for "definite and precise terminology" to address problems such as adolescent pregnancy. Key to successful implementation of the Programme, she noted, were an "effective partnership" between Governments and NGOs, expanded South-South cooperation, and the commitment of "additional financial resources for national population programmes in support of sustainable development".

"The key to sustainable development will be finding the balance between human needs and demands, and the resources available to support them," she concluded. "People are at the heart of the process, as agents and as beneficiaries. We have it in our power to lighten their burdens, remove obstacles in their path and permit them the full flowering of their potential as human beings. This is the moral and ethical basis of the Programme of Action."

The plenary continued that afternoon and for another five and a half days, sometimes including evening sessions. Speakers representing 155 States and observers, 24 UN agencies, programmes and funds, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 37 NGOs addressed the plenary. Many of them focused on national experiences in

population and on controversial parts of the draft Programme of Action. A number spoke on the links between rapid population growth, poverty and underdevelopment. Many emphasized the essential connection between women's empowerment and social and economic progress.

MAIN COMMITTEE

Also on the afternoon of 5 September, the Main Committee began its work, electing as Vice-Chairmen Lionel Hurst of Antigua and Barbuda, Nicolaas Biegman of the Netherlands and Bal Baida of Nepal. Jerzy Holzer of Poland was elected as the Rapporteur of the Main Committee. "Forget everything that you read in the past, and try to read the full document," Mr. Sai told delegates as he urged them to produce a harmonious final draft and not to reopen discussion of text already agreed upon.

For the next week, the Main Committee laboured to resolve differences or questions that had prevented approval of various sections of the draft Programme of Action at the third session of the ICPD Preparatory Committee in April. Many of its deliberations were conducted in informal sessions, or in smaller working groups which addressed particular paragraphs.

The most involved negotiations were on Chapters II (Principles), VII (Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health), VIII (Health, Morbidity and Mortality, where it was proposed that unsafe abortion be addressed) and X (International Migration, where there was controversy over the concept of a "right" of family reunification). A few of the most significant compromises that were arrived at are outlined below.

Arduous and eventually successful negotiation of the "chapeau" paragraphs of Chapter II on Principles in particular paved the way for agreement on many other unfinished sections. The first paragraph of the final version reads: "The implementation of the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action is the sovereign right of each country, consistent with national laws and development priorities, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights."

The longest discussion, and the one most closely followed by the press, concerned paragraph 8.25 on abortion. While many States favoured the first of two texts proposed that addressed the need to reduce maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion, a number of other States wanted the stronger language opposing abortion that appeared in the alternative text. The eventual compromise on the text of this paragraph facilitated the resolution of other sections of the text dealing with reproductive health and rights, family planning and safe motherhood.

The final text reads as follows: "In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. All Governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family planning services. Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and all attempts should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable

information and compassionate counselling. Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process. In circumstances in which abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe. In all cases women should have access to quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion. Post-abortion counselling, education and family-planning services should be offered promptly which will also help to avoid repeat abortions."

A footnote to paragraph 8.25 states: "Unsafe abortion is defined as a procedure for terminating an unwanted pregnancy either by persons lacking necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical standards or both (WHO/MSM/92.5)."

In the negotiation of Chapter VII, a pivotal compromise concerned the definition (in paragraph 7.2) of reproductive rights and reproductive health, the final version of which affirms "... the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for the regulation of fertility which are not against the law "

Paragraph 7.3 states that reproductive rights "rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and

violence as expressed in human rights documents."

In regard to adolescents, paragraph 7.45 recognizes "the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents" to provide "appropriate direction and guidance in sexual and reproductive matters", while calling on countries to "ensure that the programmes and attitudes of health-care providers do not restrict the access of adolescents to appropriate services and the information they need, including on sexually transmitted diseases and sexual abuse."

Another issue involving lengthy negotiation concerned the reunification of families separated as a result of international migration, and whether this should be recognized as a "right". The final text states that "all Governments, particularly those of receiving countries, must recognize the vital importance of family reunification and promote its integration into their national legislation" A number of delegations expressed strong support for convening a global conference on international migration.

The section of Chapter XIII (National Action) on resource mobilization includes estimates of annual programme costs for the years 2000 through 2015 for family planning, basic reproductive health services, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, and population research, data and policy analysis. These figures (totalling \$17 billion in the year 2000 and \$21.7 billion in 2015) were ultimately agreed to with the stipulation that they "are indicative cost estimates" which "should be reviewed and updated ... particularly with respect to the costs of implementing reproductive health service delivery."

Paragraph 13.16 states, "It is tentatively estimated that up to two thirds of the costs will continue to be met by the countries themselves and in the order of one third from external sources. However, the least developed countries and other low-income developing countries will require a greater share of external resources on a concessional and grant basis. ... "

The Main Committee finally adopted the entire Programme of Action and forwarded it to the plenary at 7 p.m. on Monday, 12 September.

CLOSING SESSION

On Tuesday, 13 September, the plenary adopted the report of the Credentials Committee and authorized the Rapporteur-General of the Conference, Peeter Olesk, Minister for Culture and Education of Estonia, to complete the Report of the Conference and submit it to the UN General Assembly.

The plenary then considered the report of the Main Committee, consisting of the Programme of Action (documents A/CONF.171/L.3 and Add. 1 to 17). The process involved formal adoption of each chapter. Chapters I, III, VI, and IX through XVI were adopted without reservations. One or more countries voiced reservations on some parts of the other five chapters.

Algeria, on behalf of the G-77 group of developing countries and China, then introduced document A/CONF.171/L.5 calling for adoption of the Programme of Action and recommending that the General Assembly endorse the Programme and consider the synthesis of national reports on population and development prepared by the Conference Secretariat.

In the subsequent debate, 18 countries expressed reservations. The Holy See, which did not join the consensus in the 1974 and 1984 population conferences, announced it was joining the current consensus "in an incomplete, partial manner", accepting Chapters II, III, IV, IX and X. It supported the emphases on linking population and development, on the protection of the family and on empowering women through improved access to education and health care, but stated that the texts of other chapters had implications it could not support.

Reservations were also voiced by Iran, Malta, Peru, Yemen, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Kuwait, Djibouti, Libya, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, United Arab Emirates, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Paraguay, Honduras and Ecuador. All of the reservations will be duly noted in the final report of the Conference.

A number of other delegations took the floor to comment on the text without offering reservations. Finally, the Programme of Action was adopted by acclamation, as delegates applauded. Several more countries then made closing statements.

Next, the Conference formally thanked the Government and people of Egypt for their hospitality. In turn, Mr. Amr Moussa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, congratulated delegates on their agreement.

In her concluding statement (see page 3), Dr. Sadik praised participants for overcoming their differences to produce a "historic" Programme of Action which "places women and men, and

their families, at the top of the international development agenda". She added, "Without resources, however, the Programme of Action will remain a paper promise."

"Compared with any earlier document on population and development," she stated, "This Programme is detailed in its analysis, specific in its objectives, precise in its recommendations and transparent in its methodology. In our field it represents a quantum leap to a higher state of energy. Thanks to the media, it has already drawn the interest of people world-wide." Delegates gave her a standing ovation when she finished.

Dr. Mahran closed the Conference with a statement hailing the Conference for the "cooperative spirit" which made it possible to reach agreement "while respecting the diversity of viewpoints".

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

ICPD Secretariat, 220 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA

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E-mail: ryanw@unfpa.org

For further information, please contact: popin@undp.org
POPIN Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/11/ungophers/popin>
POPIN WWW site: <http://www.undp.org/popin>



DR. SADIK: ICPD WAS A 'QUANTUM LEAP'

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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DR. SADIK: ICPD WAS A 'QUANTUM LEAP'

Following are excerpts from the 13 September closing statement to delegates by Dr. Nafis Sadik, Secretary-General of ICPD:

This has been an outstandingly successful Conference. You have discussed the issues to the point of exhaustion; but you have kept your purpose in sight. You have defended your principles; but you have permitted the free play of many points of view. You have remembered above all that your aim was action.

You have learned how important and deeply-felt are the differences among our cultures, backgrounds and beliefs. You have learned to respect those differences, and yet to find among them the values we hold in common.

You have crafted a Programme of Action for the next 20 years which starts from the reality of the world we live in, and shows us the path

to a better reality. The Programme contains highly specific goals and recommendations in the mutually reinforcing areas of infant and maternal mortality; education; and reproductive health and family planning; but its effect will be far wider-ranging than that. This Programme of Action has the potential to change the world.

Nothing in the Programme of Action limits the freedom of nations to act individually within the bounds of their laws and cultures. Everything in the Programme encourages nations to act together for their common interest. Nothing in the Programme of Action limits the freedom of Governments to act on behalf of their people; everything in the Programme encourages cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations, among groups of different backgrounds representing different interests, and between individual women and men.

'CHOPPING AND STITCHING'

You have demonstrated once more the value of the United Nations process of consensus-building. It is long and exhaustive, it draws the closest attention to the smallest distinctions; but in the end this apparently divisive process, this activity of chopping up sentences and stitching them together again, draws us closer together. Our chopping and stitching has produced a coat of many colours; but it is a garment that will fit us all.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, your achievements in this Conference have been historic. As one writer put it: "Where else has the fundamental condition of all women, whatever their status or the state of their personal freedom been so intensely debated, or seen to be so relevant to the next century?" The Programme of Action you are about to adopt places women and men, and their families, at the top of

the international development agenda. It is a population action programme that puts people first.

Energetic and committed implementation of the Programme of Action over the next 20 years:

Will bring women at last into the mainstream of development; it will protect their health, promote their education, and encourage and reward their economic contribution;

Will ensure that every pregnancy is intended, and every child is a wanted child;

Will protect women from the results of unsafe abortion;

Will protect the health of adolescents, and encourage responsible behaviour;

Will combat HIV/AIDS;

Will promote education for all and close the gender gap in education;

Will protect and promote the integrity of the family.

You have spent a long time discussing how the Programme of Action should deal with abortion. I think your conclusion is highly satisfactory. It fulfils the original intention of concentrating on unsafe abortion as a serious and preventable health problem. Abortion is not a means of family planning. There will be fewer abortions in future, because there will be less need for abortion.

Implementing the Programme of Action will encourage safer, more secure births, by providing information and services to enable women and men to plan for pregnancy. The Programme of Action recognizes that healthy families are created by choice, not chance.

You have recognized that poverty is the most formidable enemy of choice. Poverty is not only an economic phenomenon-~~p~~there is a spiritual dimension; and here too the Programme of Action will make its contribution. Drawing women into the mainstream of development will be one of the most important effects of the Programme of Action. Better health and education, and freedom to plan their family's future, will widen women's economic choices; but it will also liberate their minds and spirits.

Without resources however, the Programme of Action will remain a paper promise. We need a commitment from all countries, industrialized countries as well as developing countries, that they will take their full responsibility in this regard. Implementing the Programme of Action will help to build the basis for sustainable development, for economic growth with equity and justice.

Compared with any earlier document on population and development, this Programme of Action is detailed in its analysis, specific in its objectives, precise in its recommendations and transparent in its methodology. In our field it represents a quantum leap to a higher state of energy. Thanks to the media, it has already drawn the interest of people world-wide; I hope that this process will continue so that everyone can contribute to its objectives.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

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NEWS IN BRIEF

More than 300 lawmakers from 107 countries gathered at Cairo's Meridien Hotel on 3 and 4 September for the International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (ICPPD). After a series of working group discussions, they adopted by consensus the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development.

The declaration stresses the importance of a successful outcome at ICPD, and calls for placing family planning in the broader framework of reproductive health and removing barriers to family planning information and services. It also endorses the education goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, emphasizes "the right of all people to have access to primary health care by the end of the current decade", and acknowledges abortion as a major public health concern.

ICPPD was convened by the Asian Forum on Population and Development, the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and

Development, the International Medical Parliamentarians Organization, the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, and Parliamentarians for Global Action.

Speaking at the 3 September inaugural ceremony were ICPD Secretary-General Dr. Nafis Sadik; Dr. Mustafa Kamal Helmy, Speaker of the Shoura Council of Egypt, the President of the conference; Mr. Shin Sakurai, Member of the Japanese House of Representatives and Secretary-General of the conference; and Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

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In connection with ICPD, United Nations Radio has produced six 15-minute programmes on population issues:

"Population and Development" looks at the link between population growth, sustainable development and consumption; "Reproductive Rights and Health" examines the right to decide on family size and the importance of counselling and access to counselling about both sexuality and family planning services; "Gender Equality" analyses how respect for women may be one of the best ways of stabilizing population growth; "Focus on Adolescents" discusses the consequences of early sexual activity and the importance of making available to teenagers information and counselling about sexuality; "Male Responsibility" looks at the importance of encouraging men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour as well as for the children they have; and "Migration" examines the growing phenomenon of people leaving their places of origin to escape conflict or persecution or to seek a better life.

All six of the programmes are available in English, Spanish and Swahili (four programmes are available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dutch, French, French Creole, Hindi, Indonesian, Russian and Urdu) on request from UN Radio, Room S-850F, United Nations, New York, NY 10017; tel. 212-963-6977; fax 212-963-1307.

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To disseminate ICPD materials and facilitate world-wide involvement in Conference-related activities, the Population Information Network (POPIN) of the UN Population Division set up a communication and reference centre at the Conference site. Staff members collected all the statements given in the ICPD plenary and electronically placed the texts in the POPIN gopher, a data facility accessible through the Internet computer network and electronic mail.

A large number of delegates, journalists and NGOs used the centre's services to make copies of the statements and other population information; thousands of others around the world electronically accessed the information in the gopher. Technical support for the centre was provided by the Information and Decision Support Centre of the Egyptian Cabinet and the Association for Progressive Communication. For more information, contact Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, 2 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017; tel. 212-963-3179; fax 212-963-2147; e-mail popin@undp.org.

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Four independent daily newspapers on ICPD were produced in Cairo for

distribution at the Conference. All four offered up-to-date reports on activity in the plenary and Main Committee, as well as analyses of the issues under negotiation, interviews with participants, and background articles from around the world on a variety of population and development topics.

The papers are: "The Earth Times", published in English by the New York-based Earth Times Foundation; "Terra Viva", published in English by the Inter Press Service, a non-profit association of journalists; "Vivre autrement", published in French by the Dakar-based organization ENDA Third World; and "ICPD Watch", published mostly in English (with some articles in French and Spanish) by the New Delhi-based Women's Feature Service. All but "ICPD Watch" were produced in association with Cairo's "Al-Ahram" newspaper.

Also daily was the "Earth Negotiations Bulletin", providing thorough summaries of ICPD statements and negotiations (also available on several computer networks).

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To facilitate consultations among parliamentarians participating in ICPD in various capacities, the People's Assembly of Egypt, in conjunction with Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), organized Parliamentarians' Day on 7 September. The session's Chairman was Dr. Ahmed Fathi Sorour, Speaker of the Assembly. Some 281 parliamentarians from 72 countries took part.

In a statement to the meeting, IPU Council President Sir Michael Marshall noted the Union's long-standing interest in population issues,

and said that population "should be tackled as an aspect of development and not as a sector-based problem".

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More than 100 young women and men from all regions of the world and from a diversity of cultural, religious and political backgrounds took part in an International NGO Youth Consultation on Population and Development, held in Cairo from 31 August to 4 September.

Discussions and recommendations centred on the need for youth education and mobilization in regard to adolescent health, sexual and reproductive health, sustainable development, environmental protection and human rights, teenage pregnancy and safe sexual behaviour.

The consultation was organized by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Planned Parenthood Federation, International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, Society for International Development, World Assembly of Youth, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Council of Churches, World Organization of the Scout Movement, and World Young Women's Christian Association.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF NGO FORUM '94

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HIGHLIGHTS OF NGO FORUM '94

At Cairo's Covered Stadium Complex, adjacent to the convention centre where ICPD was under way, some 4,000 representatives of over 1,500 non-governmental organizations from 133 countries exchanged experiences and opinions on a wide range of Conference-related topics. The NGO Forum '94, held from 4-12 September, offered a lively, diverse programme, with more than 90 sessions each day.

Every morning started with meetings of five caucuses. In addition to the Youth, Environment and Women's caucuses which had met during the third session of the ICPD Preparatory Committee in April, there were a Religious Caucus made up of mainstream religious groups and a Pro-Life Caucus.

The Women's Caucus was the largest, with some 400-500 participants daily. Many Women's Caucus members were actively involved in lobbying activities at ICPD, and each morning, after an

overview was given of the negotiations in the Conference's Main Committee, the lobbying priorities for the day were discussed.

On Saturday, 10 September, ICPD Secretary-General Dr. Nafis Sadik visited the Women's Caucus to show her appreciation of their work. The crowd gave her a tumultuous welcome, with five standing ovations, sustained applause, foot-stamping and whistling. Many women were very moved by Dr. Sadik's spontaneous visit; some said it was the high point of their days in Cairo.

The other caucuses were smaller, ranging from 15 participants in the Pro-Life Caucus to 200-300 in the Environment Caucus. Most of caucuses have issued a final declaration or statement, often emphasizing the post-Cairo process.

Throughout each day in the complex's various meeting rooms and auditoriums, there were dozens of panel discussions and presentations organized by different NGOs from around the world. These centred on several main themes: empowerment of women, reproductive health, human rights, religion, environment and development.

FRANK EXCHANGES

In the sessions on religion, population and development, many participants reported that for the first time they were able to exchange frank views on population and reproductive health issues both within their denominations and across religious lines. This unprecedented, spontaneous ecumenical assembly was driven in part by what organizers described as the need to put forth mainstream religious views in the face of religious extremism. Some

participants voiced frustration over negative media coverage focusing on religious groups whose views were not representative of the majority of parishioners/adherents in their countries.

Interviews with Forum participants revealed a widespread enthusiasm about being able to talk frankly about issues that have not been addressed as openly at past meetings. Many women expressed a great sense of relief and freedom to be able to share their anger and frustration over such problems as unsafe abortion, teenage pregnancy, sex-selection abortion, female infanticide, discrimination against girls, child marriage and prostitution, medical malpractice by reproductive health providers, coercive family planning programmes, female genital mutilation, rape, incest and other violence against women.

Some participants contended, however, that ICPD should have given more emphasis to broader development issues, including poverty alleviation, international economic justice and the impact of structural adjustment programmes. A number of Southern groups decried what they said was a lack of attention to environmental issues, particularly wasteful over-consumption and environmental pollution in the wealthy countries of the North.

Most appeared to appreciate the civility which tended to characterize the Forum's exchanges (notwithstanding some well-publicized clashes between those with opposing views). Despite major differences in the viewpoints of participating groups, their interactions were generally respectful. For example, the display booths of the pro-choice Marie Stopes International and the International Right to Life organization were adjacent. This contrast attracted the media's attention, and the staff of the two

organizations were shown on camera shaking hands.

Forum participants generally seemed pleased with the level of NGO participation in the process leading up to Cairo and during the Conference itself. Most seemed satisfied with the services provided in the NGO Forum site and impressed by the organization of the event and the extensive programme offered. Most of the schedule of events was available before the Forum started. At the same time, organizers from the NGO Planning Committee for the ICPD responded efficiently to a flood of requests for new sessions.

Another positive experience for many was the hospitality of the Egyptian volunteers working in the Forum, and the humane feeling created by the Forum's variety of booths, restaurants and souvenir shops. While many participants were initially worried about their safety in Cairo, most came away impressed with the safety measures taken by the Egyptians.

Much of the talk during the last days of the Forum was about what to do after Cairo -- how to ensure implementation of the Programme of Action and how to monitor government actions. In this regard, the Women's Caucus issued a post-Cairo action agenda. There was also considerable discussion of how to ensure that agreements reached in Cairo on important health and gender equity issues will be carried forward to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing next year.

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ICPD Secretariat, 220 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: (212) 297-5244 or 5245; Fax: (212) 297-5250

Press inquiries: (212) 297-5023, 297-5030 or 297-5279

E-mail: ryanw@unfpa.org

For further information, please contact: popin@undp.org
POPIN Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/11/ungophers/popin>
POPIN WWW site: <http://www.undp.org/popin>



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Cairo, Egypt

5-13 September 1994

"ICPD 94" newsletter, Number 19

September 1994

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

1994

20 September-mid-December

United Nations Headquarters,

New York

49th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Consideration of the Report of the International Conference on Population and Development.

20 October

United Nations Headquarters,

New York

Commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations Population Fund.

1995

16-17 January

United Nations Headquarters,

New York

Third session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development.

6-12 March

Copenhagen, Denmark

World Summit for Social Development.

26 June

San Francisco, USA

Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter.

4-15 September

Beijing, China

Fourth World Conference on Women.

22-24 October

United Nations Headquarters

New York

Special commemorative meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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