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"ICPD 94"

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PRESS RELEASE

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ICPD PREPARATORY COMMITTEE DRAFTS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR CAIRO
CONFERENCE

Countries Agree on a Broad Approach to Reproductive Health Care,
Including Family Planning

Nearly all countries agree that providing family planning should be part of a broader approach that addresses overall reproductive health care needs, particularly of women. This concept was widely endorsed at the ICPD Preparatory Committee's third and final session (PrepCom III), held in New York from 4-22

April.

The Committee approved most of the draft Programme of Action which will be finalized and signed in Cairo in September. Central to the Programme is the recognition that population must be an indispensable part of efforts to achieve equitable, sustainable development.

Delegates from over 170 countries took part in the three-week session, which received considerable media attention; 1,200 representatives of more than 500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played an unprecedented role in shaping the outcome. PrepCom III is covered in the April issue of "ICPD 94", the Conference newsletter.

This issue of "ICPD 94" (No. 14) also reports on:

- + A Round Table on Ethics, Population and Reproductive Health, held 8-10 March in New York.
- + A UN address by U.S. State Department Counselor Timothy Wirth on 30 March, outlining Washington's new commitment to women's rights as a key component of sustainable development.
- + A 6 April press conference by 10 women representing NGOs from around the world, condemning attacks on women's reproductive health and rights.

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PrepCom III opened with statements by ICPD Secretary-General Dr. Nafis Sadik, Preparatory Committee Chairman Dr. Fred Sai, and Jean-Claude Milleron, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis. Over 100 speakers from Governments, intergovernmental agencies and NGOs addressed the opening plenary.

The rest of the session focused on negotiation of the ICPD draft Programme of Action. The document finally adopted calls for: education and empowerment of women, and elimination of all gender bias; integration of population concerns into all development policies and programmes; and basing programmes on meeting people's needs rather than demographic targets.

Poverty alleviation, environmental protection, women's reproductive health, and the rights of international migrants and indigenous people are also emphasized in the 16-chapter document.

Despite considerable agreement with the draft Programme, consensus was not reached on a few key issues, particularly the proposal to address unsafe abortion as a major public health concern. The Holy See and several countries opposed wording they said might imply endorsement of legalized abortion; many other delegations supported the approach proposed in the draft prepared by the ICPD Secretariat.

Since there was not unanimity, there will be further negotiation in Cairo on the terms "reproductive health", "fertility regulation", "family planning" and "safe motherhood".

Also left for further discussion at the Conference were: the

Programme's Preamble and underlying principles; proposals to offer reproductive health information, counselling and services to adolescents; a set of proposed 20-year goals in health and education; and estimates of the resources needed to provide comprehensive reproductive health services, including family planning, and for prevention of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

In a 25 April press conference, Dr. Sadik hailed PrepCom III's accomplishments in regard to reproductive health and women's empowerment. Addressing the session's most prominent controversy, she stated: "Neither the United Nations nor the Programme of Action proposes legalizing abortion." The actual intention, she observed, is to "bring to the world's attention the health consequences of unsafe abortion," including some 250,000 maternal deaths each year.

Looking to Cairo, Dr. Sadik said, "Women's reproductive health and adolescent pregnancy are on the table and will have to be dealt with. Facing these issues and setting a course of action will include coming to grips with realities long denied." She voiced optimism that the Conference will adopt the draft Programme of Action with few modifications, and that the final document "will serve as a liberating force for women throughout the world and as one of the cornerstones of the social and economic planning for the 21st century."

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Copies of "ICPD 94" are available in English, French and

Spanish from the ICPD Secretariat, 220 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA; tel: (212) 297-5244 or 5245; fax: (212) 297-5250. A media briefing kit on ICPD issues is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The newsletter is also in electronic form on several computer networks (for information, send e-mail to: ryanw@unfpa.org).

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