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PRESS RELEASE

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PRE-CONFERENCE REVIEW OF ICPD DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION BEGINS

ICPD SECRETARY-GENERAL ASSESSES PROGRESS MADE AT THIRD PREPCOM

The draft Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is being distributed widely to Governments and non-governmental organizations (in a final, unedited English-language version). Last month the third session of the ICPD Preparatory Committee (PrepCom III) agreed on most of the wording of the draft

document, which is to be finalized and approved in Cairo.

The draft Programme spells out actions needed to address the challenges of population, and of development as it relates to population, over the next 20 years. Its premise is that population issues and sustainable development are inextricably linked. Emphasizing the empowerment of women, it calls for a holistic approach to women's rights, girls' and women's education, and reproductive health including family planning.

The May issue of "ICPD 94", the Conference newsletter (No. 15) assesses progress made at PrepCom III. It quotes from a 3 May address to the UNICEF Executive Board by Dr. Nafis Sadik, ICPD Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

The newsletter summarizes many of the proposed actions spelt out in the draft Programme's 30 subchapters. They address such themes as poverty alleviation, environmental protection, family diversity, population growth, ageing, sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, reproductive health needs of adolescents, gender relations and male responsibility, maternal and child health, urbanization, internal and international migration, and education.

The draft Programme also defines quantitative goals in education, especially for girls; infant, child and maternal mortality reduction; and the provision of family planning and related health services. The relevant passages are excerpted in the newsletter.

Other articles in the May "ICPD 94" report on:

+ A 26 April meeting in Washington of the International Monetary Fund/World Bank Development Committee, which focused on population and resource flows to developing countries.

+ Dr. Sadik's 28 April speech and press conference at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Bridgetown, Barbados.

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In her address to the UNICEF Executive Board, Dr. Sadik pointed out that "nearly all of the 162 country delegations" at PrepCom III (held 4-22 April at UN Headquarters) "were in agreement that population must be fully integrated into and become a central component of the development process if the efforts of individuals, nations and the international community are to bring about equitable, human-centred sustainable development.

"Approximately 95 per cent of the country delegations were also in agreement with the proposed reproductive health approach that goes well beyond family planning," she added, "an approach focused not on demographic targets, but on seriously addressing the health and education needs of individuals, especially of girls and women."

While noting that PrepCom negotiations strengthened the

draft Programme in many respects, Dr. Sadik expressed disappointment that more progress was not made in addressing two pressing health problems: unsafe abortion; and the unmet needs of sexually active adolescents for education, counselling and services.

"The draft Programme of Action does not advocate or promote abortion, let alone abortion on demand," she stated. "What it does advocate is that all Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations deal openly and forthrightly with unsafe abortion as a major public health concern for women."

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On 26 April, Dr. Sadik spoke before the Development Committee's 48th Meeting, attended by finance ministers from 24 countries who comprise the Boards of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It was the first time the head of a UN agency had addressed the committee.

Dr. Sadik's statement emphasized two themes: family planning programmes make an overall improvement in people's quality of life, and are therefore a good investment; and fertility decline usually precedes sustained economic growth. She cited the success of family planning programmes in a number of developing countries.

Calling for increased international support to implement the ICPD Programme of Action, she noted that the additional funds required "pale into insignificance compared with their certain

benefits ... in terms of longer life expectancy, lower demand for health and education services, reduced pressure on the job market, reduced economic hardship and greater social stability."

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The edited ICPD draft Programme is expected to be released in English, French and Spanish in June. 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. The newsletter is also in electronic form on several networks (for information, send e-mail to: ryanw@unfpa.org).

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