

Statement to The Hague Forum, 8-12 February 1999

As written:

Address of the Government of Azerbaijan to the ICPD+5 Forum in the Hague

Honorable Chairman/Chairlady,
Distinguished participants of the Forum,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Azerbaijan I would like to greet the participants of the Forum and express our gratitude to UNFPA for this important initiative providing: the possibility to exchange our views and experiences related to various aspects of population and development programmes, implemented around the world, the world which is going through the period of global change. Taking this opportunity, we would like to express our appreciation of the increased cooperation between the United Nations Population Fund and the Government of Azerbaijan.

Ladies and gentlemen!

In the XXth century development of Azerbaijan has been influenced by the global and common factors of the demographic development as well as by specific historic events, which have seriously influenced the process of demographic modernization. In the period after regaining the independence development of Azerbaijan was severely impacted by the Armenian military aggression as well as difficulties of the transition to the market economy.

Since the beginning of 1990, Azerbaijan has been facing serious economic problems. Gross National Product has been declining every year by 20 %, inflation rate soared to its maximum, one quarter of the able-bodied age population became unemployed, country harbored more than one million of refugees and internally displaced people.

Since the beginning of 1995, as a result of the tight financial-credit policy, introduced by the Government of Azerbaijan, the measures undertaken for development of the democratic and secular society, guaranteed by the Constitution, created a favorable environment to start the work on the elaboration of the national development strategy, which includes population concerns and corresponds to the overall development goals of the country.

As a result of the interventions in the social sector we are already observing the decrease of mortality rate, increased life expectancy, as well as increase in the average enrollment ratio.

In the meantime, the growing problem of the environment degradation and concentration of population in urban areas, inadequate access to the basic medical services, declining per capita consumption of nutrients, a complex of problems related to the situation of refugees and IDPs, all these are factors adversely influencing the sustainable development

of Azerbaijan.

Government of Azerbaijan realizes that only implementation of the comprehensive and multisectoral social policies and creation of an enabling environment to bring about the change, will overcome the crisis and prevent any negative developments.

As part of the undertaken measures, the President of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Heydar Aliiev, issued a decree on the establishment of a committee on elaboration of a National Demographic Development concept. This concept will be based on the recommendations of the ICPD Platform of Action with consideration of the following major directions, influencing the process of sustainable development.

The Government of Azerbaijan is deeply committed to the development and **implementation** of these policies and attainment of the goals set by the Action Plan adopted at the ICPD. **In** the meantime, successful implementation of these **programmes** requires support and cooperation of the international community. It is crucial to ensure the wide partnership and involvement of the UN specialized agencies and donors, international and intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and research institutions. In this regard we would like to make a particular mention of and appreciation for the assistance programme in expanding the access and availability of reproductive health services provided by UNFPA since 1995. In the meantime, we would like to stress the importance of support in elaboration of the overall population and development strategy, introduction of the comprehensive approach to the population programmes, which recognizes the relationships with the current social and economic situation, necessities to expand the population related data collection, teaching and research_ Without application of this approach all interventions will result only in temporary achievements and not be successful at the end. We hope that UNFPA, donors and international institutes with the corresponding technical expertise will join us in this effort.

Recently the Government of Azerbaijan has hosted the regional conference of the countries-members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation devoted to the relatively

innovative subject of discussion “Participation of Men in Population and Reproductive Health Programmes”. The opening of the Conference was attended by His Excellency the President of Azerbaijan Mr. Heydar Aliev and Her Excellency the UN Under-Secretary General and the Executive Director of UNFPA Dr. Nafiz Sadik. We believe that this is a positive sign of attention, given to the programme, and hope that the cooperation will continue to introduce the comprehensive and multi-sectoral population programme, all to improve the quality of life of the people of Azerbaijan.

Thank you for your attention.