

**Speech by Mme Zhang Yuqin,
the Head of the Chinese Delegation and Vice-Minister
of the State Family Planning Commission of China
at the Hague Forum, February 9, 1999**

**Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

After ICPD, the Chinese Government held several meetings to discuss how to implement ICPD Program of Action in China and to improve China's national population program. The representatives from various social sectors, in particular, NGOs, and experts from research institutions are invited to the meetings. Based upon the recommendations of those meetings, the Chinese Government made major decisions on policy-making and took a series of follow up actions with good results.

1. The Strategy of Sustainable Development and Long-term Plan for Population Program

In 1996, the Chinese Government decided to integrate the sustainable development into national socio-economic development strategy, making the concerted development of population, economic growth, resources and environment protection a priority in national agenda. The national development strategy also stipulates that the total population should be stabilized within 1.3 billion by the year 2000 and 1.4 billion by 2010.

In line with this national plan, the State Family Planning Commission(SFPC) has put forward 4-step plan for population program from now to the middle of 21th century, mainly to stabilize the population and improve its quality in terms of health and education, to provide reproductive health services for everyone and to reform the mechanism of the program.

2. Initiate Changes in Thinking and Approaches regarding Family Planning Program

In 1995, State Family Planning Commission put forward that thinking and approaches regarding family planning program should undergo two fundamental changes. The first change is from focusing on family planning alone to addressing population issues in a comprehensive way. Rural family planning program should be integrated with economic development, poverty alleviation, helping farmers get better-off and have happy families with modern ethics and culture and better living conditions. The second change is from administrative-oriented approach to service-oriented approach. Any forms of coercion should be opposed.

Since 1995, State Family Planning Commission has been conducting pilot project of quality service in selected counties. The purpose of the project is to place clients at the center of the program and to meet client's reproductive health needs by promoting informed choice and expanding family planning service into reproductive health services. At the same time, the project aims at establishing a new set of indicators and mechanism of program evaluation. Now, the pilot project has been expanded from 6 to over 300 counties across the country.

3. The Role of NGOs Promoted

The Chinese Government supports NGOs in active involvement and monitoring of government's population programs. For instance, All China Women's Federation has been conducting a project called "Competing on Learning and Production" in order to promote rural women's status and a project called "Spring Buds" to help girl dropouts from schools. China Family Planning Association is promoting democratic participation in and monitoring of family planning programs throughout the country. The Happiness Project sponsored by China Population

Welfare Foundation helps poor mothers get out of poverty by granting micro-loans.

4. International Exchanges and Cooperation

In 1997, China joined “Partners in Population and Development”. We sent several study groups to Thailand, Malaysia, India, Viet Nam and Iran to learn from their population programs. We held workshops on human rights and population policy with Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Lund University of Sweden. We sponsored Advanced Leadership Program with Public Media Center in USA to sensitize leaders at provincial and central levels. UNFPA sponsored reproductive health/family planning project is being conducted in 32 counties of 22 provinces. It tries to introduce new ideas and approaches in project sites, for instance, informed choice, social marketing, adolescent reproductive health services and etc.

Through those activities, we learned about global population trend and international views on reproductive rights and health as well as different approaches and models. Our vision has been broadened and understanding of reproductive health deepened.

5. Problems and Challenges

The total population of 1.2 billion and the annual population increase of 13 million exert great pressure on China’s social and economic development. The traditional ideas such as “looking down on women” have not been totally changed. Inadequate resources hinder the training for service providers and provision of facilities to expand family planning into reproductive health services. New problems such as floating population, laid-off workers arising from the introduction of market economy need to be addressed. Aging problem and the improvement of social security system are also the issues we are going to focus in the next century.

The experiences in the past 5 years show that governments in the implementation of ICPD-POA should take into account of the conditions of their own countries. Since the population issue is a global one, international exchange and cooperation are crucial to the implementation of ICPD-POA. We would like to take this opportunity to exchange experiences and views with other countries and NGOs and to make positive contributions to ICPD+5 activities.

Thank you, Mr Chairman!