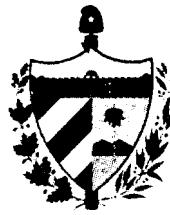


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REPUBLICA DE CUBA
MISION PERMANENTE ANTE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS

**TWENTY- FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FOR THE OVERAL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT.**

**STATEMENT BY
MR. RAUL TALADRID SUAREZ,
VICE-MINISTER OF MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND
ECONOMIC COOPERATION.
REPUBLIC OF CUBA**

NEW YORK, JULY 1ST, 1999

Distinguished United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan:

H.E. Mr. Didier Operti, President of this Special Session:

Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund:

Heads of Delegation:

Ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. President:

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the Cuban government on your election as President of this Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to examining and assessing the implementation of the Program of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development. We are certain that under your leadership our works will be steered to a satisfactory conclusion.

The International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994. made an important difference by encouraging a new strategy to address the population issues on the basis of the close link between population and development. It acknowledged that all citizens' right to health, education, food, employment, and the need to an improvement of the social, political, cultural and economic conditions of women, are essential guidelines to a sustainable development.

Instead of setting demographic goals, a new criterion --focused on human needs and development-- is encouraged.

To my country, the agreements adopted in Cairo are still valid and important. And it is not a matter of reviewing them now but of how to implement them in today's complex world situation.

The globalization process that is taking place at the world level --ever more comprehensive and challenging-- has been routed within neoliberal policies that have come to be part of the ideological, political and economic project

promoted by the main world powers. This, undoubtedly, has had a negative impact upon the development efforts of most of the South countries, especially in regard to their socio-economic development expectations, affecting, in particular, their population policies.

In socio-economic terms, the last few years have been characterized by three main aspects: a growing inequality in the distribution of wealth, an increase in unemployment and increase in poverty.

Third World peoples have the right to develop their economies and, in line with their interests and development priorities, to adopt population policies suitable to their realities, in order to solve -with their scarce resources but with a firm political will- essential issues of health, education, food, social security, employment, housing, and to make sure that women integrate into society under the premise of equality, justice and peace.

The right to development and equitable social well-being is, and will be, a fundamental human right that we, developing countries, should struggle for. And without a sustainable economic growth in our economies, it will be very difficult to cope with such challenges.

The debates in this Special Session of the General Assembly reveal that, in spite of the accomplishments achieved, there is still a long way to go to reach a full implementation of the ICPD's Program for Action. To bridge this gap, developing countries need the support of the international community. It is regrettable to confirm the continued decrease of official aid to development and many donors' lack of political will to revert this trend.

Mr. President:

Amid this difficult and complex world situation, Cuba emerges as an alternative society that, back in 1959, adopted a comprehensive concept of development which foresees the interrelation of economic and social aspects for the benefit of the whole population, such as:

- the educational programs implemented from the literacy campaign to date, when there is an average schooling level of 9th grade,
- primary health care with the family doctor and nurse program, which has a 98% national coverage,
- the guarantee of a decent job for most of the population apt to work,
- the incorporation of women into society not only as beneficiaries but also as active participants in the development process the country is involved in, on the principle of equal rights for both sexes,

- a comprehensive and profound health policy for all the people, controlling and eradicating transmissible diseases, creating and improving pre- and post-natal basic programs as well as comprehensive programs for the attention to women, the youth and the elderly,
- an extensive program on Sexual Education,
- a Social Security and Assistance policy that leaves no social group helpless.

These as well as other actions have enabled Cuba to arrive in this century's last decade with indisputable achievements, even in the midst of a tightened brutal blockade imposed by the United States, which has brought harsh restrictions for the development of our policies, programs and has put --and still puts-- at stake social results, as well as the satisfactory demographic indicators achieved through great efforts.

I will only cite some indicators that attest to these accomplishments:

- 1998's infant mortality rate was 7.1 per 1,000 live births,
- 1998's mortality rate in children 5 years of age or under was 9.2,
- mother mortality rate was 2.6 per 10,000 live births
- . life expectancy is 74.83 years, 74.7 for men, 76.9 for women
- the average of teachers per person is 1 for 44

Despite these breakthroughs, it is necessary to continue to work on a differentiated attention to adolescents, to pay attention to the problems related to the aging of the population, to eliminate sexist stereotypes that still persist in our society and that limit full gender equality in sexual and family life, and to work towards increasing preventive and educational actions related to HIV/AIDS and STDs, so to get a greater risk perception in the Cuban population, among others.

Mr. President:

In the face of the seriousness of the present situation, one can only feel indignation. And the only possible response from the international community is the commitment to encourage the efforts initiated five years ago, and to work together to fulfill all the agreements contained in the Plan for Action adopted in Cairo: to fight poverty, illiteracy, selfishness, barbarism and to bring our peoples the security they need and deserve for a dignified future life.

Thank you.