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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL  
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY  
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TO THE  
SEPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Mr. Chairperson!

Distinguished Delegates!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a great pleasure and honour for me and my delegation to be present at this special session of the United Nations General Assembly to review the implementation of the programme of action of the International conference on Population and Development in the past five years.

The Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo has given the opportunity for many population policies to include development concerns. It is our belief that policies formulated taking into account development issues would provide a framework for appropriate programmes that ultimately yield sustainable development.

It is perhaps imperative to start my statement by pointing out the structural changes that took place in Ethiopia since 1991. Three processes can be identified. They are:-

The creation of a market based economic system

The creation of a democratic political system

The decentralization and devolution of administrative powers and functions to secure regional autonomy

These processes in Ethiopia were taking place under complex and difficult circumstances. A war devastated economy had to be jump-started with emergency reconstruction and rehabilitation. A state dominated command economy is being replaced by a market driven economy based on private enterprise with due regard to the essential and appropriate role of the state in the economy. Soon after issuing the New Economic Policy in November 1991, the Government initiated economic reform subsequently concretized into a series of stabilization and adjustment programmes.

The results of the programmes have been quite encouraging. The series of reforms have resulted in removing price distortions and constraints to private sector which characterized the economy in the past while at the same time maintaining macroeconomic stability. This had required a determined

tightening of fiscal and monetary policies, as well as lifting a host of restrictions and regulations which had stifled market forces and private initiatives. The emergency reconstruction and rehabilitation programme together with the subsequent economic reform programmes enabled a quick economic recovery and growth. The overall economic growth showed an annual average rate of more than 6 percent since 1992/93 compared to less than 2 per cent before the reform.

The Government has continued deepening of the reform process particularly in terms of liberalization and privatization. At the same time since the basic problem of the Ethiopian economy is structural in nature we have prepared a long-term development strategy to prepare the ground for future growth of the economy. The strategy is oriented towards agricultural – development-led industrialization (ADLI). The strategy focuses on changing the low productivity of small-holder agriculture. By increasing the productivity of the many small-holder farmers output and income will increase – thus creating large market for non-agricultural sector. Thus ADLI will use agriculture as the spring-board for the development of other sectors. It is envisaged that this will enhance internally generated process of growth. To support the implementation of the strategy a number of policies have been formulated in key sectors of the economy.

It is suffice to mention here that among the policies are the National Population Policy (April 1993), the National Policy on Women (Sept., 1993), the Health Policy (Sept., 1993), the Education and Training Policy (April 1994), the Food Security Strategy (Nov. 1996) and the Environment Policy (April 1997). The policies and the programmes that have emanated from the policies are aimed at improving the general well being of the Ethiopian people. It is our belief that all these measures have placed the country in a better position than ever before to tackle the prevailing socio-economic problems.

On the basis of the above policies, sector development programmes have been formulated and are being implemented. These include food security, education, health, road and of course population. The policies and programmes formulated in the above areas exhibit strong inter-sectoral linkages and are mutually supportive. Experience has shown that what we do in health and education especially for women impacts positively on demographic variables.

It is also important to note that the nature of government expenditure both at the federal and regional level has seen major changes in line with the shift in the country's economic policy and strategy. The resource allocated to small

holder agriculture, roads, education, health, energy and water has seen quite significant increases since 1991.

Besides facing the daunting challenge of recovering from war and instituting a conducive environment for stimulating economic and social development, the second basic development since 1991 is the important new political measures taken for creating a conducive framework for participatory development. That is instituting federal government and regional states through devolution of power. Each regional state has legislative, judiciary and executive power.

The primary objective of the devolution process is to bring about participatory development to ensure that not only that fruits of development are equitably distributed in the country, but that people, especially those at the regional, district and community levels are given the democratic and political rights and mechanism to participate in the determination of their own destiny.

This process of devolution has also been instrumental to the implementation of the population policy in general and population programmes and projects in particular. All the regional states have established regional offices of population to ensure popular participation in the formulation and implementation of population programmes.

At the beginning of the implementation of our population programme maternal and child health and family planning services were inadequate relative to the rate at which demand increases as a result of rapid growth in the size of the target population. Hence reproductive health continues to be the focus of our National Population Programme. A significant proportion of the resources for programme implementation is devoted to this sub-programme

It should be emphasized that reproductive health services are inadequate due to limited access to health care which in turn is affected by inadequate health facilities particularly in rural areas. The health coverage is only about 50 percent of the population. While giving priority to the expansion of health facilities at the same time alternative systems such as community-based distributions and social marketing are being promoted.

The achievements in other areas of population activities are also encouraging. In the area of Information, Education, Communication and Advocacy, development of IEC strategy and activities undertaken to sensitize the policy makers can be taken as one of the achievements. Previously advertizing contraceptives was prohibited by law. That particular article was cancelled recently by the Parliament.

It is also important to mention that considerable success has been recorded in integrating population family life education at relevant levels of the educational system. Population and family life education has been introduced into the curricula of junior and senior high schools, Agricultural Colleges and teacher training institutes.

Despite socio-cultural perceptions and inhibitions, gender equity and empowerment of women is accorded great importance by the government which is reflected in the Constitution and the National Policy on Women. The fundamental changes of their political social and economic status are a key for us to eliminate poverty and accelerate our socio-economic development.

Implementation of population programmes is not the sole responsibility of the government. A number of Non-governmental organizations and the private sector are also involved. Their role is to assist the government efforts in population and related activities. Non-governmental organizations involved in reproductive health and family planning have formed a consortium and are offering commendable services to the public.



Mr. Chairperson!

Distinguished Delegates!

No matter how best we have done during the past 5 years, it is simply not significant compared with the target of the programme of action of ICPD. This is especially true in sub-Saharan Africa. Recent evaluations of ICPD+5 in Africa have identified a catalogue of problems associated with the implementation of the programme of action. The problems are institutional, administrative, technical, and financial in nature. These are a reflection of the low-level of socio-economic development in the region in general and our respective countries in particular. This leads me to make a number of observations regarding key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

The first observation is on population and education, we do recognize education as key to development in general and to the empowerment of women in particular. The proposal while critically significant masks great differences among countries in achieving the universal access to primary education. There are many countries who are close to achieving this target. But there are also some who have to cover a lot of ground whose abilities will be limited by their

capacities. Therefore, in order to provide appropriate future guidance explicit statement should be included to strengthen capacities reflecting the disparities among regions and countries. We also feel the same holds true for health.

Second observation relates to resource allocation in critical sectors. It is important to take note of the delicate balance required in priority setting and resource allocation between reproductive health and other components of the health sector: epidemic disease control such as malaria, infectious disease like TB and others which are equally critical health problems of most developing countries within the wider health system.

The third observation is on gender equality, equity and empowerment of women. Gender equality and equity will remain paper tiger and rhetoric unless we focus on changing the material and economic conditions of women in developing countries. For this we need to take note of the important complementary role of critical sectors like food security, rural energy, rural water supply and appropriate technology, to reduce the house-hold chores of rural women – in facilitating the attainment of access to primary education particularly for the girl child in the rural areas. We will not be able to bring about their increased participation in primary education however much we increase provision of schools close to their localities unless we make meaningful change in the above sectors and therefore make the demand for the

labour of rural girl child redundant. This creates enabling environment for them to go to school.

The fourth issue is that of World economic situation. Globalisation has continued to link economies creating both greater wealth and growing inequality, poverty and marginalisation. The Implementation of the ICPD has been made more difficult to sustain in the context of this situation. This has been exacerbated by the global financial crisis since 1997 which has created great political economic and institutional instability.

Compounding these problems, the debt situation of the poorest countries remains heavy and does not provide conditions for addressing poverty or the resource needs of the social sectors. Thus, it is critical to see in the proposed key future actions as contained in the Secretary-General Report more focus and visibility to global economic trends and its impact on future ICPD Program of Action Implementation and what is to be done to contain the problem.

The fifth Issue is that of capacity building to ensure implementation of not only of ICPD but also other complementary programmes. Although the Programme of Action calls for national capacity building and transfer of appropriate technology and know – how to developing countries to be the core objective and central activities for international cooperation, a lot remains to be done.

Unless we make head way in capacity building the Programme of Action will remain on paper.

The sixth issue is that the realization of ICPD objectives will also depend on what we are doing in other complementary programmes' to which like ICPD the World Community Committed itself. Therefore, it is important to see a place given in the proposed key future actions to the complementary Programme of Actions in the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, World Food Summit in Rome etc. This cross reference explicitly stated is important in that what we do or fail to do in these areas will positively or negatively affect the full implementations of the ICPD Programme of Action during the coming years.

Allow me to make one last observation. I would like to stress that the World Community is not short of blue prints and Programme of Actions. What we are short of is their implementation. This is why we are still calling for eradication of illiteracy, health problem, food insecurity etc. because what the different parties promised are not delivered in time.

The future, therefore, depends not only on meeting the promises that have been made by different parties to the realization of ICPD-PA but also Programme of Action for social development and food security adopted at Copenhagen and

Rome respectively. Anything short of the promises will ultimately affect the implementation process and contribute to slow the realization of poverty eradication to which the World Community has committed itself in a number of international for in the 1990s, which is already made difficult by the acute financial crisis of the 1997, low capacity of developing countries, debt overhang and the nature of partnership and cooperation between the developing countries and development partners.

I thank you all for your attention.