

21ST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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STATEMENT OF H.E. MR. LUIGI BOSELLI, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON
BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

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New York, 2 July 1999

Statement of H.E. Mr. Luigi Boselli Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the United Nations

21st Special Session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

New York 30 June – 2 July 1999

Mr President

Following the statement of Germany on behalf of the European Union I have the pleasure to address this Special Session of the General Assembly on behalf of the **European Community**. I would like to thank Ambassador Chowdhury and the Secretariat for their exceptional work in guiding us all through the preparatory process and ensuring that this Special Session can indeed focus on the most important issues in the review and appraisal of progress towards meeting the objectives of the Programme of Action and the priorities for **future** actions. We would also like to pay special tribute to Dr Sadik and Dr Chamie for their untiring work as global advocates for change over the last five years in taking forward the Cairo Agenda.

We are dealing here with issues that go to the core of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Treaties of the European Union. We are addressing dignity, **freedom** and equality of women and men when engaged in personal and sexual relationships, **mindful** of their rights and responsibilities and exerting their **free** choice on parenthood.

The European Community would like to take the opportunity of this Special Session to **reaffirm its commitment** to the important objectives agreed in Cairo and to state its support for the key priorities for **future** action that have been identified during this review process and outlined in the Secretary General's report.

This five-year review has clearly highlighted that there has been good progress in many areas of sexual and reproductive health and that the national and international resources made available are making a difference. However the review has also demonstrated that there is still a huge job to be done in advocacy, policy and strategy development and service provision in order to meet people's needs, especially in the poorest groups in society. A European Union Roundtable on **ICPD+5** held in January this year provided an opportunity for representatives of governments and civil society groups to exchange views - a number of important issues were raised. It was broadly agreed that we need to continue to ensure that our work on sexual and reproductive health is embedded in a human rights approach; that the language of Cairo still needs to be translated into the language of people in the street; that governments and

parliamentarians needed to ensure that appropriate legislative and policy frameworks are in place, and; that civil society groups have a very important role to play.

The European Community has committed over 700 million euro over the last five years in support of work related to population, sexual and reproductive health in developing countries. We will continue to support actions in developing countries to enable people and especially, women and young people, to have access to information and services relevant to their sexual and reproductive health needs. Our support in Africa and the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and the Mediterranean has grown and diversified steadily since the Cairo Conference. This is based on a variety of partnerships with governments, the United Nations, and a wide range of civil society groups.

While we are pleased to report that support has increased we are also aware that much of the work is only just beginning. We are increasingly looking for high quality partnerships to ensure that resources are used effectively and are translated into improvements for the poor and marginalised sections of society. Following this review we will be putting more efforts into rigorous planning and monitoring of progress and outcomes over the coming years.

The review process, including the international meetings in the Hague, have been important in highlighting several key issues that need to be given priority by governments, civil society, donors and international organisations over the next five years.

The European Commission has identified five **key areas for action**:

1. The need to maintain and increase the gains already made in developing integrated **reproductive health programmes** and in particular the provision of safe family planning services. While this is one of the most encouraging areas of progress since Cairo there are worrying trends in commodity supply and access to the poorest communities. There are **still** millions of people who do not use family planning services either because these do not exist, or due to an inability to gain access.

2. Little progress has been made in **reducing maternal deaths and ill-health** due to complications in pregnancy or childbirth. This is an area where efforts have clearly failed poor and marginalised women, hundreds of thousands of whom are dying from preventable causes each year. The lack of appropriate primary care and effective referral services needs to be tackled urgently. In addition the high levels of unwanted pregnancy and the use of unsafe abortion services by women, especially young women, needs urgent action at the legislative, awareness raising and service provision levels.

3. The EC will continue its support to ensure that **young people** have good information and **counselling** about sexual and reproductive health, are guided through what is often a vulnerable period, are aware of their responsibilities and are given access to appropriate services. This area, perhaps more than any other, has been highlighted as a priority during this review process.

4. Another major problem **recognised** during this wide ranging review is that of **HIV/AIDS**. This pandemic has accelerated more than many predicted at the time of the Cairo Conference. The EC will continue to support a wide-ranging programme of work on HIV/AIDS and **STDs** through operational research and implementation of prevention and care interventions that have been shown to be effective.

5. The often hidden problems of **domestic and gender-based violence**, abuse and sexual exploitation that cause serious health problems and undermine the position of women need to be tackled. Moreover we also need to give special attention to protecting refugee and displaced women **from** sexual violence, and when women have been violated to help to provide the necessary care and support.

Our conclusion is that the **ICPD+5** review has demonstrated that while progress is being made there is still much to be done. It has allowed us the opportunity to renew our commitment to work on population, sexual and reproductive health and sustainable development issues, especially to the benefit of the poorest. It has given us a rare opportunity to reflect upon our work over the last five years; it has allowed us to look more closely at our performance and, perhaps most importantly, set us some important new challenges for the coming years. The European Commission intends to play its part in implementing this new agenda through partnerships with governments, donor and United Nations organisations and civil society groups.

Thank you.