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EU-Statement

*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*

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Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European Countries associated **with** the European Union, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Associated Country of Cyprus align themselves **with** this statement. The 21st UNGASS is the culminating point of a thoroughgoing review process, a process which has served not only to pinpoint successes and shortcomings in the implementation of the Programme of Action and to renew commitment to its core principles, strategies and actions, but which **was** also instrumental in focusing renewed global attention on the whole complex range of topics and problems **which** form the subject matter of population and development. Highlights for the European Region in this process **were** the European Population Meeting in Budapest in December 1998, and for all of us, the Hague International Forum, which provided important input to the Conference Document now before us.

Let me, in this connection, first of all express our appreciation for the excellent **work** done by the Population Division under the leadership of Mr. Chamie, as **well** as for the great effort and dedication which has been invested into the review exercise by UNFPA under the untiring guidance of Dr. Sadik. Allow me also to add a **word** of heartfelt thanks to our excellent Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador **Chowdhury, who** led us through the difficult negotiations of the document containing the Key Future Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action. The European Union appreciates the hard and focused work as well as the spirit of cooperation and compromise of all concerned and is convinced that the final product **will** bear witness to this.

2. Rights based approach: One of the major achievements of the consensus reached at Cairo in 1994 was and is the recognition that measures and policies in connection **with** population issues have to be based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and guided by the well-being of people. The fact that the very first principle of the Programme of Action recalls the content of universally **rec-**ognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms speaks for itself.

The concept of reproductive rights and reproductive and sexual health is based on this consensus and on the recognition that only free, responsible and informed decisions of human beings can be the keystone and guideline for governmental action in this predominantly private part of their citizens' life.

The EU has noted **with** satisfaction that the Programme of Action has led to appropriate action in many countries, and that policies and programmes have been **newly** introduced or changed to conform to the Cairo Principles. Even though the concept of reproductive rights and reproductive and sexual health is by now firmly installed and widely **acknowledged, however,** much still needs to be done in future to create an environment enabling people, and in particular **women** and poor people, not only to make those free and

informed choices but also to act upon them. This is particularly true concerning the implementation of the holistic reproductive and sexual health approach to population and development. The change in paradigm from scattered family planning programmes, mother and child health programmes and other reproductive health elements to coordinated, human-rights based reproductive and sexual health services through the primary health care system is a success story in many countries.

3. Integrated **approach**: The European Union **recognises** that progress has been made since Cairo in fully accepting population issues as a cross-sectional task for global development co-operation, thus taking into account the close relationship between a country's demographic and its economic, social and ecological development. The European Union stresses in this respect the need to strengthen efforts to make population programmes broad based and well integrated in all relevant sectors. We believe that the key future actions are taking account of these points and should be implemented.

4. Forward looking position: Our position in preparing for this Special Session has been forward looking. The achievements since the adoption of the Programme of Action are really remarkable in many fields. There is no need to rewrite the Programme of Action; there is, however, a need to build on the Cairo consensus and to increase efforts in a few important areas where progress is still to be made. The European Union puts priority to

- . Call for stronger action in the field of HIV/AIDS.
- . Strengthen the focus on and meeting the particular needs of adolescents for confidential and comprehensive services in sexual and reproductive health and sex education.
- . Call for stronger action to reduce maternal mortality.
- . Achieve gender equity and equality.

The EU also draws attention to

- . migration and refugees
- . population ageing
- . resources

5. HIV/AIDS: The HIV/AIDS pandemic developed in a much faster and much more dramatic way than could be foreseen in Cairo. The death toll on young adults in their most productive age and on children who are the future of every country is appallingly high in too many countries. Social and economic development in such countries is severely jeopardised. Prevention of HIV infection is therefore urgently required. The key future actions proposed in this respect, particularly the milestones of lower infection rates to be reached, are most pertinent. A successful battle against the further spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic can only be achieved with a behavioural change from inconsiderate to responsible sexual

behaviour **with** full respect for sexual and reproductive health, emphasising in particular male responsibility in the transmission of HIV/AIDS, and the right of **women** to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Campaigns for the use of condoms, combined with sexual education, **were** quite successful to curb the HIV infection rate in countries of the European Union. Certainly, there were critical voices in the beginning of this campaign, but the success of the programme has been recognised. The European Union **welcomes** the inclusion of forceful future actions in the subchapter on “Prevention and treatment of **STD's**, including HIV/AIDS” in the document before us.

6. **Adolescents:** Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to HIV and other **STD's** infection. Female adolescents and **girls** are particularly vulnerable when they **become** victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, including prostitution, and of harmful practices such as FGM. They also are unnecessarily exposed to unwanted pregnancy curtailing their prospects for a good personal development, education, job opportunities, and their lifecourse including that of their children. Their resort to abortion, often clandestine and unsafe, is unfortunate and **could** be reduced if adolescents had information and access to reproductive and sexual health services. The experiences made and the knowledge acquired (or refused) during adolescence are decisive for the reproductive decisions in the future, hence, in their sum, for future population development. This is all the more important given the fact that the largest number ever of persons in the age group 14 - 24 is today living on this planet. Adolescents should, therefore, have full information on responsible sexual behaviour, equitable gender roles and family life. They likewise should have full access to reproductive and sexual health services with confidential and sympathetic counselling. When this approach was launched in the countries of the European Union some 30 years ago resistance **was** high. But many parents, if not most, soon understood that they still have their role in this process and that they are supported and relieved by the introduction of pertinent school curricula and other relevant services. The European Union, based on this experience, therefore was always in favour of **para. 23 (a) bis** of the Key Future Actions, which calls for the inclusion of sex education in school curricula in order to implement the Programme of Action in terms of promoting responsible sexual behaviour and protecting adolescents from early pregnancy, unsafe abortion and **STD's**, including HIV/AIDS. The European Union **likewise welcomes** the most pertinent key future actions in subchapter “Promoting adolescent sexual and reproductive health [and rights]”. Youth in poor and underprivileged groups are particularly vulnerable. Therefore, the international community should put greater emphasis on coordinated action to protect youth, including more intensified UN action.

7. Maternal mortality: Making motherhood safe is essential for women's health and survival and the survival of their children. Indeed, motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 25.2). Increased efforts need to be made to reduce the risk in

pregnancy and delivery which is alarmingly high in developing countries as compared to developed countries. For that purpose, the pertinent key future action calls for the observation of the milestone on skilled care and attendance at delivery and for investing in women's health by broader strengthening of health systems. Another approach to reduce maternal mortality, and specifically to prevent unwanted pregnancies, is to ensure access to family planning services and all forms of contraception, including female condoms and emergency contraception. In addition, where legal, abortion must be safe and accessible, and, in all cases, post-abortion care must be provided.

8. Gender equity and equality: The achievement of gender equity and equality, empowerment of women and gender-sensitive male attitudes remains an important priority for future action. In this context, the reproductive and sexual health and reproductive rights of women - while no longer disputed in principle - still need to be fully implemented. This presents one of the major challenges for future action, and the European Union feels that the key future actions now before us point in the right direction. Also, it should not be forgotten that the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing built upon the Cairo Programme of Action and took the matter of women's rights to sexual self-determination and health yet further ahead. Therefore, we clearly see it as a government issue to continue awareness raising and to combat gender based violence, sexual violence and abuse. Equally important in this regard is the CEDAW General Recommendation on Article 12, Women and Health as guideline for States Parties approach to the issue. Let us, therefore, take these developments into account when proceeding in a truly integrated manner with the follow-up to Cairo and the other major UN Conferences, and let us support the close co-operation of UN agencies on promotion and protection of women's human rights.

9. Migration: Governments in both countries of origin and destination, most of the EU countries belonging to the latter, are confronted with the issues and implications of international migration. The European Union fully endorses the key future actions contained in sub-chapter „International Migration“. The European Union wishes to underline the importance it places on the sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights of migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, in particular in view of the situation of women in those groups.

10. Population ageing: The growth in the number of older persons as a proportion of the overall population everywhere in the world, which is progressing at a much more rapid pace than expected, creates new challenges. While today older people obtain their long-term care requirements mostly from their families, changing family structures and living arrangements will make it increasingly necessary to relieve or even replace the families as principal care providers, furthermore to ensure that older people have

access to medical care facilities and to develop economic security and welfare schemes for older persons, where not in place.

11. Resources: Governments have the responsibility to assign more importance to population and development issues. Political commitment has been identified as one of the pivotal factors for progress in implementing the Programme of Action. The mobilisation of international resources, however, is needed to support and augment the efforts undertaken by national governments. The European Union urges that efforts should be strengthened towards the fulfilment of the agreed ODA target of 0.7 percent of GDP, and that the share of population assistance in ODA should increase commensurate with the scope and scale of programmes and activities undertaken to implement the Programme of Action. It remains the primary responsibility of recipient countries to use all funds effectively and efficiently.

12. Call to act now: On October 12th of this year the **world** population will reach the number of 6 billion people. The revised projections for the next decades show that future population growth may not reach the staggering figures that were projected earlier. Irrespective of future population trends decisive action of all concerned is still needed to help us cope with the challenges confronting the global community in the approaching century. The Programme of Action expressly **recognises** the interlinkages and **interdependencies** existing between population, sustainable development, empowerment of women and eradication of poverty. The population issue is influencing every field of development while, in turn, being influenced by those issues. In consequence, the population aspects inherent in any kind of development programme and project need to be evaluated and taken into account. We are relatively well informed how many more people are going to live on this planet 10 or 20 years hence, and the consequences for the claims on natural resources, including water and land, as **well as** on the demand for education, jobs, health services, and, particularly in the megacities, housing and infrastructure need to be addressed now. The European Union believes that the Key Future Actions identified in the document before us **will** assist us all in doing so. We have been working in partnership towards these goals, and the EU is looking forward to deepen and intensify this partnership. The **European** Union is convinced that the success of Cairo can be **repeated and** that a successful, forward-looking outcome of the 21st UNGASS is possible in a spirit of common purpose and shared vision.