



HOLY SEE

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**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP RENATO R. MARTINO
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE 21ST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR THE OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

NEW YORK, 2 JULY 1999

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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Mr. President:

My Delegation welcomes this opportunity to address the plenary of this Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to the overall review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

It is hard to believe that the Cairo Conference took place **five** years ago. At the same time, with all that has taken place since the ICPD, it seems so long ago.

The Holy See was able to join the consensus on parts of the Cairo document. It did so because, for the first time, development was linked with population as a major issue for discussion. At the same time, the Holy See called attention to those aspects of the Cairo Programme of Action that it recognized as being problematic. Many of those same issues continue to cause problems and concerns.

One of those aspects which is of great concern is the realization that the negotiations in the preparatory process for the Special Session have taken a step backward, placing unbalanced emphasis on population issues at the expense of development.

Poverty reduction, access to basic social services, especially health care, education and security are the best tools for meeting the goals set at Cairo and bringing about sustainable

development for all.

When the preparatory process began this past March, my Delegation, being committed to the General Assembly resolutions which directed us not to renegotiate the ICPD Programme of Action, looked forward to an opportunity to review lessons learned, best practices and possible future initiatives to serve an ever-changing world.

Thus, the Holy See has found it particularly disconcerting that some delegations, mainly from Western States, have sought in these negotiations to undo the careful balancing needed between adolescents' need for privacy and confidentiality with parental rights, duties, and responsibilities-parents' prior rights as affirmed in the Declaration on Human Rights. In the light of the current epidemic of violence amongst young people, and the appropriate calls from those in highest places of authority for parents to assume their proper responsibilities for the actions of their children, the Holy See finds it particularly disturbing that some Western States would take away the parental rights, duties and responsibilities with one hand and require that they exercise these responsibilities on the other hand.

The Holy See has also not failed to express its grave concern regarding the introduction of so-called "emergency contraception" which can serve as an abortifacient by preventing the implantation of a fertilized human egg.

The Holy See further notes with profound regret that in calling for expanded health services, including so-called "safe abortion", the text presented has failed to affirm protection for the right of conscience of health providers, a fundamental human right affirmed by, *inter alia*, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In this process, the Holy See has never lost sight of the fact that the human person is at the center of development and everything that is accomplished at the United Nations must be aimed at strengthening and protecting that human-centeredness.

As we draw ever closer to the dawn of the new millennium, humanity looks to the delegations represented here for guidance and direction. The people of the world deserve the

very best that we can provide. They look also to the United Nations to set the stage for their future and that of their children and future generations!

Now, Mr. President, during the review processes of the major United Nations Conferences of the 1990's, it is evident that many of their goals have not yet been met and that the United Nations still has a long way to go.

In this process that is quickly coming to a conclusion, the Holy See participated in the preparatory meetings and took part in the discussions and has already stated its reservations to the document that will be presented to and approved by this Assembly. This does not mean that the Holy See can simply walk away from the work begun at Cairo, the work proceeding here and which will continue into the future.

The Holy See will continue to work to reach the goals set at Cairo, at Copenhagen, Beijing and all of the other International Conferences. The Holy See will continue to call upon the family of nations to protect the dignity and human rights of each and every person especially the most vulnerable, and to promote the common good.

The Holy See will continue its involvement in the work of the United Nations to help in finding answers, solving problems and sharing ideas on population and development.

At the same time, as at the end of the Cairo Conference, I must state that nothing that the Holy See has done in this process should be understood or interpreted as an endorsement of concepts it cannot support for moral reasons. Nothing is to be understood to imply that the Holy See endorses abortion or has in any way changed its moral position concerning abortion or contraceptives. The Holy See reaffirms its **belief** that life begins at conception and every human life needs to be protected from the earliest moment to the end of the life cycle.

I would ask, Mr. President, that the text of this Statement and the annexed Note, which was presented by the Delegation of the Holy See at the end of the Preparatory Session, be included in the Report of this Special Session.