



Check against delivery!

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Dr. Árpád Gógl

Minister of Health of the Republic of Hungary

Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations
New York, June 30, 1999

Mr. President,

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this Special Session of the General Assembly. Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation in the discharge of your important duty.

My delegation fully subscribes to the statement of the distinguished representative of Germany, who spoke on behalf of the European Union and its associated countries, including the Republic of Hungary.

Population and development are among the global issues of fundamental importance humanity is facing at the threshold of the new millennium. As we approach the turn of the century, the international community is encouraged to take an honest and forward-looking inventory of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that the well-being of humankind in the 21st century will in many aspects be contingent upon our ability to provide relevant answers to the interrelated challenges, the global issues, such as population and sustainable development. The last five years have confirmed the correctness of the demographic trends and the Programme of Action put forward in the Cairo document. While we can be proud of the results achieved in addressing various aspects of these complex issues, further coordinated actions are needed. The still unresolved problems of population growth, structure and distribution, their impact on the everyday life of people, including the inadequacy of the education, health care and social security systems, require further efforts on international, regional and national levels.

The Government of Hungary continues to be committed to the principles, goals and recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, in 1994. I would like to take this opportunity to **reaffirm** our deeply felt political commitment to the ongoing implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

Hungary is among the countries where demographic processes have long been in the focus of political and public attention. Over the past decade, low fertility and continuing high mortality rates have resulted - after a short and moderate population increase- in a steady decrease of the population with serious economic and social

consequences. My Government views the demographic situation of the country as a major national and social issue which ~~calls~~ calls for governmental responsibility and the joining of all forces of society. We are compelled to act now and not to leave unsolved problems to our grandchildren. Our immediate aim is to moderate and, subsequently, stop the process of population decrease and later to achieve a modest increase, resulting in a more favourable age structure of the population. Achieving an increased fertility, improving mortality rates require continuous, wide-ranging and coordinated measures. They constitute an integral part of the Programme of my Government, and we have the political will and determination to fully implement it.

Despite changing family formation patterns, family is and remains a basic unit of society and, among others, a basic unit of reproduction. My Government strongly supports and advocates measures to promote family cohesion and the ability of families to raise children. We encourage a moral renewal of the society, where family and children are considered as a high ethical value, where bringing up children wins respect, where the related costs and difficulties are mitigated by a family-friendly economic and social environment. Important measures have already been taken by the Government that are aimed at improving the situation of the families with children, through a reformed tax and social security system. To ensure a coherent and effective framework for the implementation of these measures, the Government initiated the elaboration of a new family policy. By the same token, we make efforts to strengthen equal opportunities and to help people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities. To assist families as well as socially disadvantaged groups are important considerations in improving our social security system.

Further steps are needed to strengthen our health services, including the improvement of prenatal care, childbirth conditions and care of new-born babies. Our health improvement programmes should include actions aimed at changing widespread irresponsible behaviour patterns during pregnancy, such as smoking and alcohol consumption. We have to develop a complex set of measures to decrease the alarmingly high rate of induced abortion, taking into account the relevant decision of our Constitutional Court. The wider use of modern contraceptives, development of a family planning network have also to be ensured as well. Through these measures, a further decrease in premature birth should also be achieved.

The high levels of mortality and morbidity in all age groups, but especially among the male population, require special attention in our country. In order to develop a better and more efficiently operating health care system, to make it more prevention oriented, to promote healthy lifestyle and to make it more attractive for the population are only a few of those areas, where a lot remains to be done in strong interaction between the Government and civil society.

Human dignity is a right belonging to all generations. This fundamental right can be enjoyed only in a well-developed system of care and support for the elderly people. These challenges require joint efforts by the family, the local community and the government.

Mr. President,

Hungary has always considered that tasks of this magnitude call for effective international and regional cooperation. Based on these premises, Hungary hosted the European Regional Population Meeting in Budapest last December to take stock of the regional experiences of the post-Cairo period. We are pleased to see the major conclusions of that meeting reflected in the document to be adopted at this Special Session. The United Nations, its Programmes and specialized agencies should play an important role in monitoring and promoting the implementation of the Programme of Action, paying special attention to the differences in the situation of various regions. The Republic of Hungary is ready and willing to be part of these efforts.

Thank **you**, Mr. President.