



*PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM
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As WRITTEN

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

**TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
DEVOTED TO THE OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL
OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT**

JULY 1, 1999, NEW YORK

Mr. President
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction:-

When we adopted the Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in September 1994, we were committing ourselves to the support of strategies that aim at enhancing the quality of life for families and individuals through recognition of their rights to quality services. The ICPD was indeed a turning point that marked a departure **from** the notion of population control to a human rights - based approach in addressing our demographic concerns.

As we meet today to review progress and agree on strategies that will strengthen further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, my delegation would like to thank the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Population Division for spearheading the global review process where the views of non-governmental organizations, Parliamentarians and the

youth have been taken into consideration. At the Africa Regional level, our due appreciation goes to the Joint ECA/OAU/ADB Secretariat for having taken the leading role in the assessment of Africa's performance towards the achievement of the ICPD goals and objectives.

The review indicates that in general there has been some measurable **world-wide** progress in the implementation of the various areas of the ICPD Programme of Action. However, in these first five years of implementation we have also witnessed a decline in Official Development Assistance (ODA) as well as political crisis which has resulted in instability in a number of regions in the world. These events have disrupted the smooth running of programmes and provision of services, and have contributed to added unemployment and hence increased level of poverty. On the other hand the unprecedented high pace of globalization has exerted increased pressure on all of us to reflect on today's realities and maintain the universal ethical standards that provide people with a variety of affordable choices. This therefore has called for a re-arrangement of our expenditure patterns such that more emphasis is placed on population programmes, health and education. However, our economic difficulties have dictated otherwise.

Prowess At National Level

At the National level, the Kingdom of Lesotho has given increasing attention towards population issues since the early 1970s. However, greater progress was only realized after 1994, with the revision of Lesotho national population policy so that it responds to the emerging national demographic concerns as well as to the pertinent recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action. At the moment consultations are continuing with various stakeholders at district level, to solicit their views and inputs into the revised policy.

In the area of reproductive health, the Lesotho Safe Motherhood Initiative, which is a comprehensive programme aimed at reducing the levels of infant, child and maternal mortalities, was launched by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare on 18th November, 1993. Community Based Distribution of contraceptives and social marketing of condoms have been institutionalized within the framework of this programme; and 'after realising the success of the programme, the Lesotho government is now in the process of expanding activities beyond the initial pilot sites. Also, given our heavy reliance on donor support, Lesotho has been progressively increasing its counterpart contribution towards the purchase of contraceptives.

The in-service training curricula for midwives, nurse assistants and community health workers, has been revised to be in line with the latest developments in the field of reproductive health and to integrate issues related to the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including **HIV/AIDS**. With adolescents identified as one of the special target groups to be addressed, the government has since 1994 adopted a National Adolescent Health and Development Programme for implementation. Within the umbrella of this programme, three adolescent health centres have been established to provide services and counselling, and plans are underway to expand these centres from three to six. Peer education is another strategy that has been adopted to raise the level of awareness among youth on issues relating to their health in general and to their reproductive health in particular.

Mr President

In Cairo we agreed that we could not be able to make any meaningful developmental progress without full emancipation of women. Thus in our country a number of non-governmental organizations are working with women at grassroots level in an effort to raise their awareness about their legal rights and about the need to break the silence on issues of rape and domestic violence. A Law Reform Commission has also been set up with

the aim of reviewing all laws that **are** discriminatory.

Efforts have also been made to have gender concerns well focused, coordinated, and streamlined into development plans. In order to achieve this, a draft policy on gender has been produced and it is being discussed with various stakeholders. A new Ministry of Environment, Gender and Youth Affairs has also been recently established. It is therefore hoped that this strengthened institutional capacity will have the required catalytic effect towards gender equity and equality in Lesotho.

Challenges

Mr. President,

Inspite of the progress made in the few areas mentioned above, Lesotho is still faced with a number of challenges in the area of population and development. Foremost is the pro-natalist socio-cultural environment within which population **programmes** have to be implemented. In this regard a socio-cultural study is being undertaken in order to identify issues that can be addressed through Population and Family Life Education which is being institutionalized in the formal education system of the country. Phase I of this study, which analyses the qualitative aspects, has been

completed.

Another problem is that of the HIV pandemic and the threat it poses to our socio-economic development. In our country it is younger people who are mostly affected, yet we are still at the stage of denial with regard to the existence and spread of HIV/AIDS hence the **reluctancy** to take preventive measures. Nonetheless, the Lesotho Government has established a National AIDS Prevention and Control Programme whose aim is to monitor and control the spread of HIV infection. It has also sensitized senior government officials about the need to raise the level of awareness about HIV/AIDS, as well as to embark on preventive measures.

Proposals For Further Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action

Mr President,

At the political level we are convinced and committed about the long term value of population programmes. What we need is to double our efforts to accelerate and improve the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. In this regard, as we search for strategies towards enhancing our performance, we agree in general with the Secretary-General's proposals which have been negotiated at length during the previous meetings of the

Preparatory Committee for this special session of the UN General Assembly. In particular, my delegation would like to pronounce Lesotho's position on the following:

First, we need intensify our efforts to integrate population variables into the development planning process by equipping planners and indeed decision makers with a better understanding of the relationship between population, poverty, gender inequity and inequality, health, education and environment, to mention a few.

The interlinkages between these areas are massive and therefore have to be clearly understood by all. We must therefore, work hand-in-hand with the international community to stimulate direct investment, reduce the debt burden and ensure that structural adjustments are responsive to our social, economic and environmental concerns.

Second, we affirm that women's rights are also human rights. This affirmation therefore calls for an' honest and serious move towards the eradication of gender disparities in all aspects of life.

However, while we agree that the girl child must be protected from harmful traditional practices, be supported to attain higher levels of education and

as an adult be free to make decisions for herself, attention should also be given to the boy child through strategies that accord him the necessary education and **socialise** him about family responsibilities so that he can build a stronger partnership with his female counterpart.

And last, in Cairo we agreed that we would not promote abortion as a method of contraception. However, we also recognized the health complications suffered by women through unsafe abortions as well as the costs incurred by the health sector in the management of such complications.

The extent to which unsafe abortions occur is a reflection of the gap that exists between the supply and the demand for contraceptives. As governments we must shoulder the responsibility and therefore intensify our efforts to procure contraceptives and ensure their equitable distribution to all those who need them. We must also ensure that the attitudes of health and other service providers do not restrict the access of young people to the services and information they need.

Conclusion

In conclusion Mr President, my delegation would like to submit that as we continue with the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, we should also put emphasis on the following:

Increased efforts on resource mobilization for population programmes at both national and international levels;

Strengthened partnership between government, private sector and non-governmental organizations, and

Increased recognition that government leadership and commitment are as important as the resources that are needed.

It is in the light of our appreciation of the progress we have made and upon the realization of the many challenges that still lie ahead, that the Kingdom of Lesotho welcomes this opportunity to **re-affirm** its commitment to the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Thank you for your attention.