



**STATEMENT BY**

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MINISTER OF NATIONAL UNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,  
MALAYSIA**

**AT**

**THE TWENTY-FIRST 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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*(Please check against delivery)*

Mr. President,

The Malaysian delegation joins in extending our congratulations to you on your election as the President of this twenty-first Special Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

In reviewing and recommending key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, the paramount challenge facing us today is not only to reaffirm but strengthen the commitment we made five years ago at Cairo; that it is PEOPLE that matter - their freedom, security, development and well-being. The rights of individuals, couples and parents must be safeguarded in as much as the stability of society and country cannot be compromised. Malaysia recognises the family institution as a fundamental unit of society and the primacy of ethical values cannot be denied. While the rights of children and adolescents should be safeguarded and promoted, parents have the primary rights and responsibilities to guide the lives of their children. Malaysia's Vision 2020 which recognises that the thrust of development is in the building of a strong and resilient family system and it is in this framework that Malaysia will strive to further implement the ICPD Programme of Action (POA) into the new millennium.

Mr. President,

When we met in Cairo in 1994, East Asian economies, including Malaysia were enjoying rapid economic growth. Today this situation has changed. This ICPD + 5 Review will be remembered as a time when several developing countries are being challenged by the financial crisis beginning in mid-1997. In our countries, the effects are already visible resulting in breakdown of economies and livelihood of people; job retrenchment; interruption in the provision of basic social services, food shortages and even civil and political unrest. It is thus crucial that programmes for basic development and survival be protected and in fact strengthened, in order to minimise the impact of the crisis on all vulnerable groups. While Malaysia strongly believes that a comprehensive solution to the crisis and the prevention of a similar recurrence require a global solution, the need for reforms in the international financial architecture is also of paramount importance.

Globalisation has opened new opportunities for sustained economic growth and development of the world economy. Simultaneously, the same global community is threatened by environmental degradation, food crises, disease epidemics, many forms of discrimination, intolerance, violence and the risk of losing the richness of our cultural diversity. It is therefore of utmost importance to **recognise** that responses to these changing circumstances and the achievement of sustainable development and social progress will require increased solidarity and exchange of ideas and information expressed through appropriate multilateral programmes and strengthened international cooperation.

Mr. President,

On its part, Malaysia has introduced a series of policy packages to address the economic and social impact of the financial crises and to ensure the continued implementation of the ICPD POA. Focus was shifted towards preventing any further contraction to the economy, reactivating economic growth and ensuring the continuation of socio-economic projects so that the living

standards and quality of life, particularly of the poor and lower income groups are not adversely affected.

Malaysia's socio-economic development plans have laid emphasis on an enabling environment. However the ICPD, the Social Summit and the Women's Conference gave us the opportunity to further pursue more complex and specific issues in the area of population and development. In addition, a social action plan has been formulated to address and alleviate emerging social problems such as **STD/HIV/AIDS**, unwanted pregnancies, and substance abuse. A more comprehensive and integrated family development programme has been developed to address the impact of socio-economic development on family structures, relationships and lifestyles.

Malaysia's high standard of health care services has enabled more Malaysians to live well beyond their 70s, but changes in lifestyle and pressures of urbanisation have resulted in increase in degenerative diseases. In this regard, advocacy for wellness through a thematic healthy lifestyle campaign is in its tenth year of implementation. A comprehensive range of reproductive health services is already integrated into primary health care where family planning is accessible, available and affordable without any coercion or discrimination. Malaysia has embarked on an inter-ministerial initiative where the broader concerns of reproductive health are being addressed to include programmes on reproductive health of adolescents and youth, gender sensitisation at all levels, enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act of 1996; and the formulation of a comprehensive Child Act which would seek to protect children and adolescents from sexual abuse, incest, violence and moral danger, and including provision for ensuring greater parental responsibility. Linkages and partnerships between the government, NGOs and the civil society will be further enhanced to complement the Government's efforts in achieving the goals set in Cairo and in its monitoring and evaluation.

Mr. President,

Let us at this time work together towards advancing the ICPD goals. Collectively we should make every effort to mobilise national and international resources, including ensuring that the donor community fulfils its financial commitment. The current Asian crisis and its serious implications on population programmes require urgent attention. Let this Special Session be the time for us to strengthen and reaffirm our commitment so that all the people of the world can enjoy the benefits of development.

I thank you.