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STATEMENT

BY H.E. Dr. **SODOV SONIN**,
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE
OF MONGOLIA

AT THE 21st SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

July 2, 1999 New York



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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I express on behalf of the Government of Mongolia the appreciation that the United Nations General Assembly convenes for its Special Session to review and appraise the 5-year progress made towards implementing the Cairo Agenda on population and development.

Thanks to the intensive efforts and activities of the organisations within the United Nations family, the strategy of human-faced and sustainable development is becoming the core of the developmental policies of the countries and nations around the world. The International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, was a powerful watershed in Integrating human rights issues into overall development process. In Cairo we have learned that development is about empowering people, including women to equally benefit from growth and that it is also about the urgency of concerted and mutually reinforcing policies and actions to address the peoples' needs. This underlines not only the respect for human rights but also the necessity of putting a human face on development.

Mr. President,

Mongolia is a country that is pursuing simultaneous transition to democracy and market-oriented economy. The structural reforms and budget constraints during the **transitional** period have affected the delivery of essential social services particularly to the scatterly located rural population. Mongolia has a youthful population **with almost** 57 percent of the total population under age 25. This underlines the increased need for the Government to implement appropriate policies for providing quality education and health care, including reproductive health services, education and increasing employment opportunities.

Although a number of difficulties are arising during this transition period, the Government of Mongolia has been keen to implement the ICPD goals. Thanks to our efforts and assistance from UNFPA and other UN Agencies, substantial improvements have been reflected in decreasing maternal and child mortality, strengthening reproductive health services to reach the remote and semi-nomadic population, increasing the reproductive health information to the youth and promoting gender equality. These efforts are the part of our National Reproductive Health Programme.

However, there are a number of challenges that we face in the field of population. The maternal and infant mortality rates are still high. Domestic violence and alcohol abuse are emerging social problems that demand immediate appropriate actions. There is a need for further improvements in the access and quality of reproductive health services to the poor and those living in remote areas. Although the country has not experienced the HIV/AIDS epidemic to any significant extent, the incidences of STDs are on rise.

The Mongolian Government has, in cooperation with UN Agencies, designed multi-sectoral strategies on preventing HIV/AIDS and STDs. We are very pleased to see that the General Assembly's Special Session is focusing on strengthening the actions to improve the reproductive health education and services for adolescents and the youth, to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS and STDs, reduce maternal mortality and morbidity and increase further male involvement in addressing women's reproductive health concerns and needs.

Mr. President,

The concept of population and development embraces a broad range of policy interventions. The Mongolian Government firmly believes that ensuring the interlinkage between economic growth, social sector development, environmental protection and sound governance in developing and implementing policies and strategies is vital for sustainable development. To exercise a human-centered development approach is, therefore, essential to building a just and democratic society where all generations fully benefit. Therefore, besides pursuing sustained economic growth, the Government attaches great importance to poverty alleviation, unemployment reduction and the protection of the poor and the vulnerable.

Although the resources are limited, we are determined to act in an appropriate and **timely manner**.

The Mongolian Government believes that active and mutually supporting collaboration with a multitude of social partners is an important and necessary component of development. The civil participation is being increased, including in providing reproductive health care services to women and adolescents. Thus active civil participation was felt during the drafting of the new Family Law.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to note that the Mongolian Government is strongly committed to achieving **the ICPD** goals and we are keen to continue to strengthen the actions for further effective implementation of Cairo Programme of Action.

Thank you.