



MYANMAR

As WRITTEN

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STATEMENT
BY
H.E. U SAW TUN
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND POPULATION
AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE MYANMAR DELEGATION
TO THE
TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York
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Mr. President,

Firstly, may I, on behalf of my delegation and on my own, express our satisfaction in seeing you presiding over the Twenty-First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. President,

In December 1997, the General Assembly considered the question of the **follow-up** to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994 and decided to convene a Special Session of the Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Programme of Action which marked the beginning of a new era in population and development was approved by consensus by 179 countries in September 1994. It is noteworthy that this landmark agreement focused on the well-being of human beings rather than human numbers as a focal point to address issues of economic development and balanced, sustainable population growth.

Mr. President,

It has been estimated that the world's population will exceed 6 billion in the year 1999 and will be between 7 billion and 7.5 billion by the year 2015. It has also been learnt that population stabilization will not be reached for another **50** years, at the earliest. With increase in population, demand for basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter will also increase accordingly. As such, it is essential that the international community address this global problem through concrete and systematic measures in a timely manner. Without such measures, various social problems could arise. For instance, deterioration in health sector could result in recurrence of controlled diseases such as Malaria and Tuberculosis. The problem of HIV/AIDS could also become more acute for developing countries. This problem has far-reaching implications beyond the developing countries, even to encompass the developed countries as well. We therefore firmly believe that international cooperation and collaboration is of paramount importance to address this global problem in a timely and effective manner.

Mr. President,

In the national context, the population of Myanmar, is at present about 48 million. The total land area of Myanmar is about 677,000 square kilometers. The population density is quite low at 70 persons per square kilometer. One great advantage of our nation is our strong agricultural base. Our main economic objective is to develop agriculture as the base and at the same time pursue all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well. Plans also have been laid down for sufficiency of food for the increasing population. The State is encouraging the use of all available land including

fallow and virgin land to enhance the agriculture sector. Hence, food **security** is not an issue for Myanmar.

Mr. President,

The programme of action calls for all countries to take steps to meet family planning needs. Steps taken by individual countries will certainly differ depending on their national circumstances. In this regard, we consider birth spacing as most appropriate for Myanmar. Therefore, we are encouraging birth spacing programme for family planning. This programme will also enhance the quality of life and raise the standard of living of our people.

Mr. President,

One of the objectives of the programme of action is to prevent and reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS. This disease has now spread worldwide not only posing serious challenges in terms of health but also having negative impact on the development potential of countries and societies. Although the sources of HIV/AIDS are not from Myanmar, it has also affected us to some extent. We have instituted a multi-faceted programme to combat this fatal disease, including education and information campaigns to raise awareness and emphasize behavioural changes. With the co-operation and collaboration of the United Nations Agencies, we have been undertaking systematic measures to address this problem. The Government also has laid down necessary health policies and programmes to control it. Due to these measures, instances of HIV/AIDS remain relatively low.

Mr. President,

Our government is in the process of building a society where peace and prosperity prevail, where **labour** rights, the rights of women and the rights of child are given all encouragement and promotion that they rightly deserve. We firmly believe that peace and development are two sides of a coin and cannot be separated, for without peace there can be no development and without development, there can be no lasting peace. The State has paid much attention on national reconsolidation and has succeeded in bringing back almost all armed groups except one insurgent group known as KNU. Hence, insurgency which for decades had hindered development is now virtually over and all the energy of the Armed Forces and the people are being devoted to nation-building endeavours.

Mr. President,

The issue of migration in general and irregular migration in particular is a complex one. Throughout history, people have crossed over borders more or less **freely**

and moved from place to place in search of better opportunities. Economic reasons are usually the principal reason for such migration. We realize the magnitude and complexity of the problem, for as far as **Myanmar** is concerned, our favourable population-to-land ratio as well as our fertile land has attracted people from neighbouring countries. In the same way, many people **from** Myanmar, for economic reasons and better job opportunities, have found attractive employment in more economically developed neighbouring countries. Since we have porous borders, we find ourselves in a situation that we are not only a country of destination but also a country of origin. We realize that migration, including irregular migration, has both positive and negative dimensions and should be addressed in a comprehensive and balanced manner by considering its origin, manifestation and the facts in countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination. At the same time, it must be recognized that every country has the sovereign right to safeguard its borders and to enhance its own migration/immigration laws.

Mr. President,

The Cairo conference acknowledged the need to mobilize significant additional financial resources for implementation of the programme of action. During the five years that had elapsed, ODA had fallen way below the agreed target of 0.7 percent of the GNP. My delegation recognizes that even developed and industrialized countries had faced many difficulties in implementing the Cairo programme of action. Without adequate resources and assistance, many developing countries could not hope to achieve even the bare minimum standard laid out at Cairo, let alone further implementation. In this context, my delegation would like to stress that agreed commitments made towards ODA should be fulfilled.

Mr. President,

As we review the achievements we have made regarding the programme of action that the international community adopted five years ago, I remain firmly convinced that population and development are interdependent and that in our search for sustainable development, we must join hands in genuine cooperation. I would like to express our readiness and sincere desire to work together with all nations to build a peaceful world in which all people can live a happy and productive life, free from political, social and economic anxieties.

Thank you.