



PHILIPPINES

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STATEMENT

By

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Mr. President,

I bring to you and to this Assembly the greetings of His Excellency Mr. Joseph Estrada, President of the Republic of the Philippines. This special session of the General Assembly is a landmark event that could pave way for the international community to fully implement the ICPD Program of Action.

As we formulate together a comprehensive set of key future actions, it is crucial that we do not only consider those that would strengthen the linkages between population and development, but more importantly, that those actions should primarily focus on addressing the needs of individuals and families.

Mr. President,

In the last 5 years, the Philippines has performed relatively well in relation to the goals set out by the ICPD. The strong support of both executive and legislative branches of government led to major policy and program changes which facilitated the implementation of ICPD objectives.

The Philippine Population Program underwent a drastic paradigm shift from the divisive context of demographic targeting towards a recognition that population is part of the human development agenda. As a result, the Population Program was considered as necessary investments in people within the overall context of improving quality of life. Institutionally, this shift also highlighted the important role of the civil society in the implementation of the population program that has led to viable partnerships 'with non-government organizations (NGOs).

Recently, the Philippine Government has further refined its Population Program within the context of a strengthened poverty reduction program but still following closely the ICPD Programme of Action which focuses on a client-centered, integrated reproductive health approach. This new Population Program aims to: (1) help couples/parents achieve their desired fertility goals within the context of responsible parenthood; (2) prevent teenage pregnancies, and early marriage by providing them with information and services on population and reproductive health; (3) improve the health of individuals by contributing to the further reduction of infant mortality, maternal mortality and early child **mortality**; and (4) promote policies that will help government achieve a favorable balance between population distribution and economic activities.

In support of the Population Program, the Philippine Government further established the following programs to further articulate the ICPD Programme of Action: (1) the Reproductive Health Program; and (2) the Women's Health and Development Program. The former spelled out the ten (10) key elements of the reproductive health service package which includes family planning, maternal health care, adolescent and male reproductive health, prevention and treatment of reproductive tract infections including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS, prevention of violence against women, among others. On the other hand, the latter aims to integrate the women's perspective in all health programs and services at all levels of the health care delivery system.

— Several landmark legislations and executive directives were passed and issued, respectively, to support the ICPD Programme of Action. These policies are aimed to achieve

the following: (a) to improve the coverage and delivery of health services (such as RA 7875 or the National Health Insurance Act; RA 8504 or the Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act); (b) to strengthen the role of women, the youth, indigenous peoples, and the elderly in development (such as RA 7192 or the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act; RA 8044 or the Youth in Nation-Building Act; RA 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act; RA 7432 or the Senior Citizens Act); and (c) to protect the welfare of women, children and migrant workers and their families (such as RA 6725 or the Anti-Discrimination Against Women Act; RA 8353 or the Anti-Rape Act; RA 7877 or the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act; RA 8042 or the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act; DOLE Department Order Nos. 21 and 18; Executive Order No.275).

The Philippine Government likewise in its desire to pursue a Contraceptive Independence Initiative (CII) similar to the Vaccine Independence Initiative (VII) which will gradually wean the country away from too much dependence on donor agencies for its contraceptive supplies, for the first time, will try to convince the legislature to include in its annual budget starting next year, an explicit and albeit modest contraceptive budget. It is also in the process of assisting the private sector particularly big corporations to set up their NGO with the end view that NGOs in the near future will assume bigger and complimentary roles in the Population Program given their strategic position, extensive resources and network.

Despite the progress made so far in relation to these policy and program shifts, the Philippine Government is fully aware that the Philippine has one of the fastest growing population in the world. For the period 1990-1995, the Philippine Population is growing by 2.32 percent. With this rate, the Philippine Population is expected to double in about 30 years from the present level of 74.7 million. The UN Population Division in its population projection report also highlighted that the Philippines will be the 12th most populous country in the world by 2025. Unless this trend is corrected, and effective population management policies are implemented, the increasing population of the country will definitely exert pressure on its limited available resources of the country and will have serious repercussions on our efforts at poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

Fully cognizant of these, the Philippine Government is resolved to address this concern with its newly formulated population program which gives emphasis in helping couples/parents achieve their fertility goals within the context of responsible parenthood as well as preventing teenage pregnancies, among others.

Moving on to the proposals for key future actions, we are glad to note that the report of Secretary-General which has been the basis for negotiations at the Preparatory Committee recognizes the adverse impact of the Asian crisis on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Because of the crisis, some countries have had serious difficulties in generating revenues for their population-related activities.

For doing its utmost within its means, the donor community, especially the UNFPA and the United Nations system, has done a great service to those affected countries like the Philippines, and for that, I wish to convey my Government's profound appreciation.

On the changing age structure of the world population, we share the concern over the growing ageing of the population. However, while the world population of older persons is

growing at much faster rate than the population of children, the latter is still larger in number. Hence, future key actions by the government in partnership with parents and the whole society should also include addressing the problems of this larger group. This is important for the developing countries like the Philippines where 33 percent of their population are children.

It is extremely important to note that resource constraints will tend to limit the measures that governments of developing countries can initiate in relation to its ageing population. Given the young age structure of many developing countries, if faced with the choice of allocating resources for programs for children as against the elderly, priority will probably be given to the former. Recognizing, however, the importance of anticipating the problems of an ageing society, we welcome the proposal for the UN system to document the experiences of countries in the management of their ageing population and to disseminate widely information on best practices.

My delegation fully supports the various measures under the section on international migration which are directed at protecting and improving the conditions of migrant workers particularly female migrant workers, who are easily exploited and harassed. Specifically, we call on those countries who have not done so, to ratify or accede the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The ICPD has successfully broadened the perspective of population, particularly its linkage with other aspects of national policy, such as poverty alleviation and environment. At the same time, the new approach towards the broader aspect of reproductive health has made implementation more challenging. It is, therefore, important that future key actions highlight coordination and management mechanisms in the operationalization of programs. This would mean a strong partnership with the **NGOs** and civil society.

Mr. President,

On a final note, we believe that the success in the implementation of ICPD Program of Action will largely depend on the efforts of all sectors in individual countries. However, international cooperation will make a bigger difference especially in countries that lack resources. We shall continue to coordinate with local governments, NGO and civil society to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action. We shall also work hard to improve budget programming and allocation to ensure effective and efficient utilization of resources. We would like to call on our partners-in the developed countries to do their part in this global problem. For those who are yet to fulfill their commitment to allocate 0.7 percent of their gross national product for official development assistance (ODA), we urge them to do so. And we invite them to renew their commitments in the ICPD and fulfill the agreed targets for financial assistance.

It is also in this respect that we assure them of our commitment to utilize effectively official development assistance (ODA) and meet the goals we all set in Cairo, five years ago.

Thank you and Good Day.

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