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STATEMENT

by

***H.E. Mrs. Simona Marinescu,
Secretary of State for Social Protection,
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection,***

*on the occasion of the 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*

New York, July 1st, 1999

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to attend such an important event and I avail myself of this opportunity to convey my congratulations for submitting to the Special Session of the General Assembly such a topical question as it is the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development.

Romania aligned itself with the Statement made by Germany on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, I would like to refer to the Romanian perspective on the issues under consideration.

The aforesaid Programme of Action redefined the world's views on population growth and the best ways of addressing this challenge. It placed this issue in the context of sustainable development and asked for investments in human development, especially for improvements in women's status and health, as key elements for stabilising the population growth.

On the eve of the 21st century, countries have to identify and review the successes, obstacles and future challenges of the implementation of Cairo Programme of Action. In this context, the **Romanian** Government has taken steps to integrate population concerns into its development strategies and has adjusted its policies and institutions to reflect the broader emphasis on women's status and health.

It has also focused its policies on population groups - such as children, young persons, women, elderly, and migrants - having particular needs that might affect the quality of their lives. The new vision for the 21st century calls for greater equality between men and women, stronger partnerships between governments and private sector, and greater involvement of local communities.

In Romania, the demographic trend during the last years has been influenced by complex economic and social factors, such as the freedom of couples to decide upon their desired number of children, the housing shortages and low access of young people to their own dwelling, the unemployment and the immigration.

The base of the population pyramid shows a slow, but steady, narrowing - the result of a declining fertility and increasing mortality among adults. The changes in the age structure have also altered the "dependency burden" - i.e. the share of the population that is likely to require financial support from the working age population.

Mr. President,

Aware of the population ageing challenge, the Romanian Government is currently undertaking reforms of the social insurance and social welfare systems. A structural social insurance reform aims at guaranteeing an adequate social protection, providing the beneficiaries with a fairly distributed replacement income taking account of the insured risk, the performed work and the period of contribution.

The future legislation on pensions will put in place a 3 pillar pension system: a compulsory publicly managed scheme on a “pay as you go” basis, a complementary compulsory fully funded and privately managed component and a voluntary private pension system.

The new public pension system will be organised and will operate as a single “pay-as-you-go” system guaranteed by the State and managed by a National Social Insurance House; the system will have a compulsory and contributory nature and shall be **characterised** by inter and intra-generation social solidarity. Once the new law comes into force, the retirement ages shall be gradually increased to 65 years for men and 60 years for women.

In correlation with the public pension system reform, it has been envisaged the development of a private pension system with a view to providing the pensioners with incomes complementary to those received from the public pension system, by increasing the level of private savings and facilitating the development of financial markets. In addition, the optional recourse to insurance companies or investment funds will be also available for the voluntary participation of employees in pension schemes organised by the employers or, furthermore, in other private pension funds.

Reforms have been also undertaken in the field of public health, in order to improve the medical assistance system, paying a special attention to women’s state of health. The country’s number of inhabitants is decreasing, having as results significant alterations in the age group structure and “the demographic ageing” of the population, with negative consequences both for family and society.

The reform process in the field of health was speeded up in 1997. In this regard, when it was enacted the Law on social health insurance, which is the legal basis of the new system of medical assistance in Romania, the National House of Health Insurance was put in place and it will manage the health insurance fund financed from the insured persons’ contributions.

Thanks to this law, the enforcement and development of a private medical care system, part of the national policy on the population’s medical care, will pay a special attention to women’s state of health, who are more sensitive to the social and economic changes and to the political, cultural or psychological factors.

The maternal death rate, due to obstetrical hazard or abortion, has strongly decreased since 1990, after the liberalisation of abortions but, in comparison with other European countries, the indicators still have higher values. If the abortion-related demises denote serious lacks as regards the concerned women’s educational level, the ones due to obstetrical hazard constitute a serious medical problem.

During the last years, the general death-rate has had a permanently ascending evolution, over the European average; correlated with the lower values of the birth-rate, it has determined a descending curve of the natural growth which has already reached (after 1991) negative values.

The Ministry of Health, in co-operation with the World Bank and other international organisations, set up a family planning network all over the country, having as main objectives the reproductive health, the diminution of the number of abortions, the wide-spread utilisation of other contraceptive measures, as well as the decrease of maternal death-rate.

The term "reproductive health", as a global approach, is a concept quite newly launched on the occasion of the Cairo World Conference on Population and Development. This concept replaces the previous demographic interpretation with an approach from the perspective of the fundamental right to reproductive health and sexual life.

It should be mentioned that, after consultation with NGO's acting in the field of HIV/AIDS and representatives of UN agencies working in Romania, it was decided on to set up a national **multi-sectorial** commission for AIDS, for the purpose of examining the potential spreading of AIDS and its consequences for the **Romanian** population and of assessing the programmes developed until now with a view to working out a national strategy against this dreadful malady.

Last but not least, one should recall the extremely useful support and the close co-operation between the **Romanian** authorities and the United Nations Population Fund and its national office on the implementation of several programmes on reproductive health and sexual education and on the development of a National Strategy for Family Planning.

Mr. President,

Population growth has been one of the most significant challenges of the 20th century. In the last decade, the world community has made financial commitments to continue investments in education, family planning and other health programs, to create a more favourable economic and social environment, and to promote the advancement of women.

Bearing in mind that the quality of people's depends on the way these commitments are to be met, Romania, which actively participate in the Special Session, fully supports, on the one hand, the adoption, by consensus, of the document 'Proposal for key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the international Conference on Population and Development' and, on the other hand, the effective transposition into practice of its principles, goals and objectives, in close partnership with the civil society and in co-operation with the international community.

Thank you Mr. President.