

AS WRITTEN



**SLOVENIA**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. ANTON ROP**

**MINISTER OF LABOUR, FAMILY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

*Check against deliver-v!*

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**PERMANENT MISSION OF SLOVENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Mr. President,

First allow me to express my great satisfaction over this Special Session, which enables us to discuss the results achieved and the obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the Cairo Conference in 1994, as well as other issues related to population and development policy.

Slovenia has associated itself with the Statement made by Germany on behalf of the European Union. We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support to the objectives and principles of the Programme of Action. Slovenia has also been following with great interest its implementation on the global level.

We believe the Programme of Action to be a well-structured framework of objectives, within which national governments can be encouraged to **find** the most appropriate path to their fulfilment. However, we wish to stress the importance of **recognising** the diversity of systems, cultural heritage and accepted norms and values in different countries, which undoubtedly presents an obstacle in reaching our objectives. We therefore feel it is pivotal to encourage both cooperation and coordination between the UN agencies and individual countries in their quest for common solutions.

With regard to the future implementation of the Programme of Action, we strongly believe that a special attention and greater commitment is required particularly in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, and protecting mothers, since the mortality rate of mothers in certain regions is increasing. In this context it is necessary to ensure that countries are committed to providing education and **counselling** to young people regarding reproductive health. Demographic challenges we are facing at the end of this millennium demand us to go beyond mere discussions and call for concrete actions to mitigate negative consequences. It is important to acknowledge that the growth of individual problems of demographic nature takes time. It is therefore unrealistic to expect a solution overnight. This should by no means discourage our common efforts to seek answers and appropriate effective solutions.

Although the fields that can be depicted as segments of population policy have already been on Slovenia's agenda, we have sought further solutions to population issues since the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994.

Indeed Slovenia's eagerness to respond to the objectives of the Programme of Action is further evident in its decision to increase the share of public expenditure in GDP for human resource development.

As regards population and development policy Slovenia employs various measures in different areas of social policy, which also indirectly influence the reproduction of the population. Notwithstanding diversity in the solutions applied, Slovenia acknowledges that its population problems remain and might become increasingly compelling. For this reason it will be necessary to devote special attention to them, on expert as well as political level.

Regarding the Programme of Action and its implementation, it is essential to underline the importance of certain issues that were to some extent neglected at the 1994 Conference. We are referring to the increasing problem of the ageing of the population, an issue that is already demanding our full attention. Certain actions in dealing with the problem and its numerous consequences have already been taken, both within individual countries and in the UN, not least by declaring this year to be the International Year of Older Persons.

The ageing of the population is one of the major demographic challenges at the end of the twentieth century, and it will significantly influence the formulation of social security systems. The changing demographic conditions and their long-term consequences demand a coordination between needs, available programmes and capacities. The ageing of the population also demands an entirely different social and personal approach to old-age. It involves adjusting and enhancing attitudes that value elderly people as an important human resource, integrated in society's development.

The Republic of Slovenia continues to hold the view, on both the global and national levels, that major importance should be attached to access of population to education and health services, prevention of poverty and reducing the level of mortality. And as already mentioned, we are devoting special attention to the ageing of the population, primarily with the goal of maintaining elderly's independence and dignity. Furthermore it is essential to further develop equal treatment and access to all positions in the society regardless of gender. The basic guideline in all these efforts must be respect and protection of human rights.

Policy changes must prevent the danger of the rapid spread of social problems, the decline in active work, and the growth of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Poverty remains a problem of all countries of the world. Its existence is a vocal reminder of the urgent need for different, integrated approaches.

Slovenia is devoting particular attention to the problem of poverty and social exclusion. We have formulated a National Programme to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, which harnesses the measures of various policies from the areas of employment, housing, healthcare, **labour** relations, social security, the tax system and education. In formulating the National Programme we have acknowledged the important role played by non-governmental organisations and social partners.

Mr. President,

The development of today's society is closely linked to the standard of living of those who comprise it. Quality of life is determined not simply by material goods, but is made up of a whole set of simultaneously interwoven factors: health, education, employment, elimination of poverty, respect of human rights, the possibility of **self-fulfilment**, social and cultural integration and living in an ecologically enlightened environment. The goal of human development must go beyond amassing material wealth, and should understand such wealth simply as a means towards creating circumstances in which individuals will be able to live a healthy and creative life. I hope that recommendations adopted at this Special Session will further contribute to full implementation of the objectives we have set together in the Programme of Action.

The role of the United Nations and its agencies could be vital in this, and let us therefore jointly support them, both in principle through our discussions and in practice through our actions.

Thank you, Mr. President