

AS WRITTEN



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT

BY
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MINISTER FOR NATIONAL PLANNING
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AT THE
21ST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR THE OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME
OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Mr. President

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment as president of the twenty-first Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and commend you for the fine job you are doing thus far. On behalf of the government and people of Solomon Islands, may I take this opportunity to thank UNFPA, other United Nations' agencies, and our development partners for their contribution towards the socio-economic development of our small island nation.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 was an important global landmark, where recognition of the broader issues of inter-dependence between population, development and environment was highlighted. The Program of Action (POA) adopted at that time required specific commitment to its effective implementation over the next 20 years. Global collective actions is crucial for further progress. In Cairo, Solomon Islands joined the international community, in committing itself to the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action. We promised to give high priority to issues affecting our young and fast growing population.

The ICPD Program of Action has given us a new paradigm of development: improving quality of life through poverty alleviation; enhancing universal access to education; ensuring equity-equality and empowerment of women; and advocating universal access to high quality reproductive health services. Additionally, we in the Pacific Islands firmly adhere to our central role of family values and the commitment we made to the "healthy islands" concepts which are embraced in the ICPD program of action.

Mr. President.

Recognizing the interdependence of population and socio-economic development, Solomon Islands accords population issues a high national priority. Population policy-related concerns have become an integral part of the Department of National Planning and Development. Accordingly there has been an increase of 15% and 12% of the total annual budgetary allocation to education and health respectively. We have been able to integrate reproductive health and family planning services into the primary health care system as well as intensifying interventions to prevent, control and eliminate the leading causes of morbidity and mortality. In addition, we are able to strengthen partnerships and collaboration between public and private sectors including NGOs to improve

provision of quality basic education for all children and development of school curriculum on priority health issues.

Since Cairo, Solomon Islands has adopted National Policies on Population, Women, and Nutrition. The Government is also engaged in the design of a National Youth Policy. The National Population policy of 1998 provides a major framework for population-based socio-economic development while the National Women's Policy sets the framework for women in development and their empowerment as partners in nation building.

Mr. President.

Solomon Islands notes the key actions for further implementation of the **ICPD** Program of Action as reviewed by the Preparatory Committee. We welcome the efforts and cooperative spirit demonstrated during the preparatory process. Of particular importance, as a least developed country, with a young and fast growing population; high maternal and infant mortality rates; and high illiteracy rate especially among the female population, adoption and implementation of this program of action is not only relevant but has become more urgent than ever before.

Future direction on population and developmental issues must be drawn from past successes, and learnt from shortcomings as we **reaffirm** our commitment to the program of action. In doing so, Solomon Islands firmly believes that human rights must be respected and promoted with responsibility. These responsibilities can only be realized through proper information, education and communication made available to the entire population. This must be our commitment to and mandate for the next millennium.

Mr. President.

With regard to internal population migration and displacement, Solomon Islands has been able to provide basic health services to internally displaced population as experienced in the current ethnic unrest on Guadalcanal. At this juncture, I wish to express my government's appreciation for the prompt response to our request for humanitarian assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations and other development partners.

The Reproductive health components of the **ICPD** program of action have been well integrated into the main health care system. We are able to broaden our program in maternal health; child survival activities; adolescent health; and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV & AIDS awareness programs. Solomon Islands is yet to record a case of AIDS. However, the high prevalence rate of **STDs** among our youth is a concern. Education is our main strategy. Participation of civil society including churches and **NGOs** has been a major thrust towards achieving a reduction of maternal mortality and childhood

illnesses. Crucial to improved reproductive health is the understanding and awareness of these amongst leaders at all levels including the rural population. Solomon Islands is also mindful of its vulnerability to paedophile activities in our region. Steps are being taken to legislate against such activities.

Mr. President.

Given the current economic difficulties, my government has embarked on a major policy and structural reform program. A Medium Term Development Strategy was developed and adopted of which the underpinning principle is that all developmental initiatives are population or people focused. The ultimate goal is to fully integrate population issues into all sector development plans and activities.

Like other island states in the Pacific, Solomon Islands has made progress in the last five years. The magnitude and the extent of the achievement are determined by the structural, socio-economic and political environment of the country. We have learnt one most important lesson in our experience in the process of the implementing the **ICPD** Program of Action - that is unequivocal national commitment, effective partnerships and collaboration, and community support and participation are essential elements that can be utilized to address the more challenging issues. It is also crucial that the donor community honor its commitment and continue to assist our small island nations to achieve a more sustainable development.

Mr. President.

In conclusion, I believe that at the end of this special session of the United Nations Assembly, we should be prepared to approach the next decade with vigor and reaffirm our commitment towards achieving tangible goals of the **ICPD** Program of Action. Solomon Islands will continue to reaffirm its commitment to the principles and goals of the Program of Action and will seek to ensure that a concerted effort for a healthy, happy and a productive population as we enter the new millennium.

I thank you Mr. President for your attention.