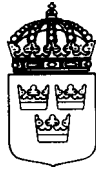


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**Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of
Action of the International Conference on Population and Development**

Statement

by

**Ms. Lise Bergh
State-Secretary for Gender and Equality Affairs**

1 July 1999

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

PERMANENT MISSION OF SWEDEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Let me begin by saying that Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

1. The ICPD in Cairo five years ago was a remarkable achievement. It broke new ground and revitalized and carried forward the discussion on population and development. It also recognized that human rights include reproductive rights. My government reaffirms its commitment to the goals and content of ICPD. In this context Sweden wishes to emphasize sexual rights as a human right.

2. Since the adoption of the Program of Action, impressive progress has been made in many countries. A number of governments and civil society organizations have contributed in implementing the Cairo agenda. The process leading up to UNGASS has facilitated a dialogue centered on major outstanding concerns. As time is short, I would like to focus on four issues where there are reasons for alarm.

3. The overarching issues on the ICPD agenda are crucial to development, politically, economically and socially. One is *the rights and needs of youth*. Never before has this planet witnessed such a large proportion of young people. About 1.2 billion of the world's inhabitants are youth. It is important to realize that young people are living in a world where change is taking place at a breakneck speed. On the threshold of an emerging millennium that will be theirs, young people have claims, expectations and hopes. Among the threats facing young people in early years are HIV/AIDS and STD's. In and out of school, youth have a right to preventive means, such as education about sex and reproductive health and to confidential reproductive health counseling and services. Sexuality is a reality and a strong force in life and needs to be recognized and addressed accordingly.

4. There is a need for an environment and attitudes that can foster equality in relations between women and men. Traditional male behavioral models must be recognized and challenged. Male violence against women and male irresponsible sexual behavior must be confronted.

5. Another very important issue in this context is the empowerment of women. Empowerment of women is about equal participation and equal representation at all levels of the political process and public life, but is also about economic, social and reproductive rights. Great disparities remain in legal and traditional status, health and education between women and men. This is unacceptable. Especially the exposed and disadvantaged situation of girls and young women needs to be addressed.

6. *Gender equality* is thus at the heart of the Program of Action. Gender is not a synonym for "female". Gender is about relations between women and men, and a key to this relationship is the redistribution of power between women and men. Women's empowerment is therefore an imperative for gender equality and absolutely essential for the achievement of sustainable development. But it is important to recognize that women's empowerment also leads to changes in traditional male roles and behavior. Swedish experience indicates that men stand much to gain from this process.

Mr./Mme President,

7. Events since Cairo have furthermore brought to the forefront two issues of substance. One is HIV/AIDS. The other is maternal mortality.

8. Already in Cairo *HIV/AIDS* loomed as a threat to many societies, especially in Africa. Since then the menace of HIV/AIDS has grown and is also making its presence felt in other parts of the world. Estimates show that current resource needs for the prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS by at least three times exceed the amount noted in the Cairo Program of Action. The demands for more resources and more action are urgent. All the more alarming that they are not yet forthcoming. Some societies are shying away from the realities of the situation, avoiding coming to grips with it. This state of affairs cannot and must not continue. We should all put more resources into the struggle against HIV/AIDS

9. The fact that *maternal mortality* still is a serious issue, is another deeply disturbing fact. Conservative estimates show that the death toll for maternal mortality is at least the equivalent of three jumbo jets loaded with women passengers crashing every day, year in and year out. Many of the victims are young girls. This is a horrendous but persistent figure. Ninety percent of the maternal deaths take place in Africa and some parts of Asia. It is the single health factor that shows the greatest disparity between developed and developing societies. One of the disgraceful aspects of the statistics for maternal deaths is that the solutions to the problem are well known, and yet progress is at a standstill. If any category of deaths is unnecessary and shameful, the high rate of maternal mortality is surely one.

10. In many instances the deaths are caused by illegal and unsafe abortions. The complications of abortions should consequently be addressed irrespective of the legal status of abortions. It is imperative that all societies do their utmost to ensure that abortions are safe and rare.

11. A persistent theme throughout most of the ICPD Program of Action is the *struggle against poverty*. The allocation of resources to meet the ICPD agenda is thus a challenge nationally and internationally. ICPD+5 has shown that by and large governments have failed to respond adequately to the call in Cairo for more resources. Apart from a handful of states the developing countries have not lived up to the ICPD goals. Nor has the donor community, which has met only about a third to half of what was expected, depending on how the estimates are made. This is just not good enough. My government is committed to the UN target of 0.7 percent for development co-operation and in fact aims to increase its allocations for development co-operation. Sweden will also step up its share of development co-operation resources for ICPD-related issues.

12. We must furthermore bear in mind that not only action by governments is essential. The role of civil society organizations, such as non-governmental organizations and local community groups, is especially significant. They are partners in the task of putting the Program of Action to work. They are an equally

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indispensable part of democratic pluralism and provide a means for ordinary people to express their priorities and influence decision-making.

13. As I noted initially, the process leading up to this Special Session and developments since Cairo have in some respects been positive. However, the document before us falls short of what my government hoped for. We feel that it could be more action-oriented and forward looking. Much is still a repetition of the Cairo Program of Action. The areas that I have touched on are examples of concerns where we feel that the document could have taken us further.

14. I would like to summarize by saying that at first glance these areas, the rights and needs of youth, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality, appear to be very different in nature. However, when considering them we realize how much they are interrelated and dependent upon one another. The younger generation, the stakeholders in the future of our planet, will sooner or later take stock of what we have achieved. Will they judge us to have done too little, been too noncommittal and our actions too diffused - or will they say that we understood the challenges ahead and faced up to them? Politically and developmentally the world is at a crossroads, and ICPD+5 is part of that scene. Let us all as individuals and as governments live up to the plan of action that we all have agreed on. The time for action is *now*.

Thank you!