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General Assembly

**Special Session for the Review and Appraisal
of the Implementation of the Programme of Action
of the International Conference
on Population and Development**

INTERVENTION

by .

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Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Cairo Conference five years ago was one of a series of major United Nations conferences during the 1990s which made it possible to obtain a wide consensus of support for sustainable human development. It marked a turning point in the debate on the issue of population and also on international initiatives. The Swiss delegation, like several others, welcomed the results achieved in Cairo. Individuals, and in particular women, were no longer to be seen as objects, but to be **recognised** as active subjects in development, with rights, and in command of their own destinies. This dimension of sustainable development can no longer be ignored.

Now that we have been freed from narrow approaches to the issue of population, which focused solely on contraception and family planning, population will become a central feature of strategies on human development. Experience has shown that a broader approach – one based on improving the status of women, and promoting education, job creation and basic health as well as reproductive and sexual rights and health - has a direct influence on the birth rate and on birth spacing.

The Cairo Action Programme has been implemented in various regions and countries of the world at different speeds. These differences in pace are due not only to the inherent challenges of development but also, very often, to cultural and religious dimensions in relation to questions concerning sexuality, to the different roles of parents and of the state, as well as to the differences in the relationships between men and women. Nevertheless, new concepts of health and of reproductive and sexual rights have become widespread and have begun to be applied in numerous countries.

With regard to financing, however, it is necessary to mention at this follow-up session that the set targets have been missed by a wide margin. We are well aware of the frustration of our partners in the developing countries. One of the main causes of this shortfall in financial resources is the general - and worrying - fall-off in government aid to development.

The context of international co-operation provides Switzerland with a favourable environment in which to implement the Cairo Action Programme. On a multilateral level, more attention has been devoted to the priorities set out in the Action Programme. This has translated into a reorientation and an increase of Swiss government aid to these areas. The UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS are the main beneficiaries. On a bilateral level, things are more complicated due to the fact that an integral approach is not easy either to conceive nor to implement. Those development programmes which Switzerland supports, particularly in the areas of health and education, are often still lacking in a gender-specific approach, and in those programmes concerning health, in an inadequate emphasis on reproductive health.

Switzerland wants to continue to strengthen its support for health and education programmes, to promote a balanced partnership between men and women, to reinforce the social dimension

of development, and to continue the fight against poverty. In this context, it attaches particular importance to the 20/20 Initiative.

In the future, Switzerland plans to place special emphasis on the following aspects of its population and development policies:

- To ensure that a key dimension of each programme is the free choice for every woman on when to have or not to have a child, or to have no more children
- To combat unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal mortality
- To combat sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/Aids
- To promote education on safe sex
- To offer information and access to good-quality reproductive health services, especially for adolescents
- To combat violence against women: both physical and psychological violence, and certain traditional acts of violence such as genital mutilation.

These priorities naturally also constitute the essential elements of Switzerland's national Action Programme. The most difficult challenges confronting our society are, however, probably quite different. They include the ageing of the population, the inputs of migrants into Swiss society, solidarity between the generations, the lack of complete and genuine equality between men and women, and changes in ways of thinking and living, in particular with regard to the family.

Mr. Chairman, in spite of the difficulties of finding a consensus on all the above-mentioned points and on the current disappointments, one encouraging aspect of this follow-up session of the Cairo Conference is that it clearly serves to redraw the attention of the international community to the most important issues of the Action Programme and to mobilise the international community. The Swiss delegation is pleased to see a clear expression of the wish to pursue the path laid out in Cairo which leads to a development based on the human dignity and the comprehensive personal **fulfilment** of each human being.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.