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Statement

By

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TO THE

Twenty-First Special Session of the General Assembly for the  
Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the  
Programme of Action of the International Conference on  
Population and Development

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**Mr. President,**

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your election as a president of this Special Session of the General Assembly, with the sincere hope for its successful conclusion under your wise leadership.

I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to the UNFPA Executive Director, as well as the Chairman of the Committee on Population and Development, for the great efforts they have made in the preparation of this Special Session on the Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD which was held in Cairo in 1994.

**Mr. President,**

The most important element that characterizes the ICPD is the multi-dimensions which were introduced to the scope of population policy concerns, so that they encompass almost all aspects of cultural, social and economic walks of life, which heretofore conform to the interests of human development.

We would like to underline the interest of the Syrian Arab Republic in population-related issues and in the Programme of Action of the ICPD, which states: "The implementation of the recommendations in the Programme of Action is the sovereign right of each country, consistent with national laws and development priorities, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights. "

Since 1970, population issues have been given an increasingly prominent status in Development Plans in the Syrian Arab Republic. The letter of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, sent to the ICPD held in Mexico in 1984, had underlined the importance of addressing the population issues by linking democratic changes with social and economic developments.

The Fifth Five-Year Plan for Social and Economic Development (1981-1985) in Syria has initiated a new dimension as the population issue has been taken into account in assessing and satisfying the needs of rural and urban areas. This has proved the interactive impact between the population factor and the social and economic development, as well as the considerable amount of challenges facing the task of meeting the increasing needs of the population for services and the provision of job opportunities to the increasing numbers of the labor force.

**Mr. President,**

The Syrian Arab Republic is pursuing a comprehensive and balanced social and economic development strategy. Within the framework of this strategy, the following population-related topics are being accorded high priority.

Education is accorded a special priority in Syria. It is free at all levels and universal without distinction between males and females. It is also mandatory at the elementary level. Population Education has been introduced as a topic for study in both formal and informal education, particularly **after** the ICPD, through activities, some of which, are undertaken in collaboration with the concerned UN agencies.

The State provides various health services, including reproductive health, family planning and education on sexually transmitted diseases, free of charge in both rural and urban areas, in addition to the health services provided by the private sector.

In light of the evolution of child and maternal care concept into a reproductive health concept, the strategies necessary for the application of the reproductive health services have been developed, as well as cross-sector cooperation, governmental and non-government alike.

In the field of reproductive health and related health advice, education, information and communications, all this has contributed to a speedy and considerable improvement in health indicators, specifically those related to mother-child health care. The periodical data system in Syria shows a more than doubling of the rate of females registered in, and benefiting from, the family planning services over the last four years.

The issue of gender equity and empowerment of women enjoy great attention in Syria at the governmental and non-governmental levels. The Central Bureau of Statistics is currently collaborating with the governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, as well as with ESCWA in implementing a wide-range project on establishing a gender database statistics.

Among the most prominent manifestations of gender equity and empowerment of women are the following:

- \* The important position they enjoy in legislative authorities. The female percentage in the People's Assembly (parliament) has reached 11%. Moreover, Syrian women enjoy senior posts in both executive and legal authorities, as well as other activities and functions. Women also assume distinguished positions in the NGO's.

- \* Increase in the rate of female students at all school levels. Compared to all graduates of elementary schools, the percentage of female graduates who completed their elementary school education is 47% , 50% for preparatory and secondary schools and 40% for universities.

As for participation, the NGO's play an important role in designing, preparing, implementing and evaluating the population activities, by coordinating their actions, among themselves, and with government bodies at all levels.

**Mr. President,**

Concerning the issue of refugees and evacuees, the programme of action of the ICPD paid attention to resolving the refugees problem by stating that "the problems of refugees and displaced people arising **from** forced migration, including their right to repatriation , should be settled in accordance with the relevant principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other international instruments and relevant United Nations resolutions". It is incumbent on our conference to call, once again, for the

implementation of UN resolutions related to ending the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories and the application of the right of refugees and evacuees to return to their homes, while emphasizing that occupation totally contradicts with development, stability and security.

In the field of direct financing of the population programs in the Syrian Arab Republic, implemented with the UNFPA, the governmental and non-governmental bodies contribute ten-fold of the contribution made by UNFPA and the other donors to these programmes. Accordingly, we do hope that the donor countries would meet their commitments concerning the provision of **funds** and technical assistance necessary for the population programmes.

Finally, we re-iterate our thanks and appreciation to the UN Secretariat, and to the UNFPA, and express our delegation's readiness to cooperate with you for the success of this session.

**Thank you.**