



UKRAINE

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press-release

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STATEMENT
by H.E.Mr.Olexander Chalyi,
First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine,
at the 21st Special Session
of the United Nations General Assembly

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New York

Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of this Special session. You can rely on full support of the Ukrainian delegation in fulfilling your responsible mission.

The 21st Special Session of the UN General Assembly is being held at the time when the mankind is about to enter the 21st century. At the threshold of new millennium we turn back to sum up what has been done and to consider what should be done further. Without any doubt we can state that the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) will always remain in the history of the Twentieth century as a milestone in promoting international cooperation and action on demographic issues.

Consensus reached in Cairo provided the international community with ample opportunities to introduce new strategies, to change our approaches and priorities in the field of population at the national, regional and international levels. The Programme of Action approved in Cairo five years ago is targeted at integration of demographic issues into the global agenda. We welcome the positive results achieved so far in implementing this important document, in particular, the incorporation of population policies into national development programmes, enhancing gender equality and empowerment of women, promotion of reproductive health, establishing the effective partnership. We should continue our joint co-ordinated efforts aimed at supporting the countries in need with the purpose of full implementation of the ICPD decisions.

At the same time, while identifying new strategies, we should take full account of those new tasks and challenges that emerged in the world since the Cairo conference. Globalization and liberalization of international economy, increasing integration and interdependence, being the defining trends of the 90s, can not but influence the demographic situation in the world. Having **recognised** the value of open economies, we should however, be ready to address the arising population problems, such as increasing migration, including the transit one, outflow of the most productive, young strata of the society from the less developed economies to the more prosperous, as well as drug trafficking, spread of HIV and *other* dangerous diseases to name but few.

The global financial crisis which severely affected many countries, including Ukraine, once again stressed the need for integrated strategies aimed at prosperity of nations and sustainable development. We strongly believe that the United Nations has to play a central role in addressing this evolving framework. From the Ukrainian delegation's perspective, UN is well placed to work out, in cooperation with the relevant agencies of the UN system the international mechanism allowing to prevent the weakening of human potential in those countries, experiencing temporary economic hardships.

Mr. President,

Speaking about my own country - Ukraine, I have to **emphasise** that we inherited **from** the former Soviet Union not only well known economic problems, but also the completely unbalanced population structure, **unfavourable** situation in the area of public health and disastrous ecological environment, including demographic consequences of the Chomobyl catastrophe. All these factors caused the natural decline of the population of Ukraine, which has dropped during the last five years by almost 2 millions.

Equally alarming are the following figures during the “last six years an average life expectancy in my country has **fallen** from 70.5 to 67 years; **children** population decreased by more than 700 thousand. In spite of some recent decrease in the **infant mortality rate**, a steady decline in physical and mental health of the **Ukrainian children** is reported.

The fertility rate in Ukraine has gone from an average of **approximately** 1.4 children per couple six years ago to 1.2 children per couple today, well below replacement levels. It is a real challenge for my country which is experiencing very serious ageing problem.

According to the UN criteria, it was as back as in 1959, when the population of Ukraine has been already on the threshold of old age. Unfortunately, the ageing tendency has been continuously progressing over the last years: a share of people aged 60 and more years old constitutes now **almost** 20%.

Despite the extension of family planning services, many women still lack access to the modern contraceptive methods, that has resulted in high level of abortions and teenage baby delivery with serious consequences for women’s reproductive health. Besides, the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS is taking epidemic proportions in Ukraine.

By sharing with you, **distinguished delegates, these** domestic problems, I have no intention to create an impression that Ukraine needs more attention than anybody else, but rather to prove why my country considers the Cairo Programme of Action as an extremely vital concept if not the strategy of survival.

Proceeding from that, the Government of Ukraine has taken decisive measures to translate the ICPD Plan of Action into its national population strategy, that is to make it an integral part of the social and development policy with a special emphasis on the most acute demographic problems.

Efforts aimed at improving the public health care, social and economic support of the family, public assistance to the vulnerable segments of population have become the priority issues, as it is determined by the Constitution of Ukraine.

The Parliament of Ukraine has reviewed the national legislation in the population field by adopting a wide range of specific laws aimed at strengthening the public health, encouragement of youth, prevention of AIDS, social protection of disabled and of the people most affected by the Chernobyl disaster. The next steps will provide for introducing the system of medical insurance in Ukraine, improving the infection prevention and giving more protection for the rights of the patients.

The Government of Ukraine has been also implementing a special Plan of Action aimed at improving the sociodemographic conditions, which incorporates a number of specific national programmes, namely The Long-term Programme of Advancement of Women and Family, Protection of Maternity and Childhood; National Family Planning Programme; National Programme “Children of Ukraine”, to name but a few.

Let me stress, Mr. President, that having to allocate over 1 billion US dollars each year only to **minimise** the aftermath of the Chernobyl catastrophe, not to mention social spendings

needed to compensate hardships related to the process of market transformation of our economy, Ukraine is experiencing significant difficulties in meeting the goals set forth in Cairo. The national reproductive health and other indicators still require **considerable** improvement to match international standards. Therefore, we would more than welcome further international assistance to this end, including through the implementation of the relevant **UNFPA** programmes.

Mr. President,

The famous English novelist George Eliot said: “The strongest principle of growth is human choice”. We have to recognize that the ICPD was an important step, but it is still not enough. As many previous speakers underlined, our forum is meant to give a new, additional impetus to the international cooperation in the field of population and development.

I am convinced that having adopted the “Proposals for key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD”, we will all contribute largely to the implementation of this very important task.

Thank you for your attention.