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Statement of the U.S. to the 21<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly, Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, presented by Under Secretary of State Frank E. Loy

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*Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Cairo was a turning point. It changed both the way we think about population programs and the way we put them to work. An unprecedented 179 nations joined the consensus. The ground-breaking Program of Action recognized that if we are to stabilize global population, reduce poverty and promote sustainable development, we must address children's health, women's health and women's rights, including their reproductive rights, and gender equity and equality. Only then can we ensure a better quality of life for all.

And just as governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world together forged the Cairo recommendations, so have they, since Cairo, collaborated in putting the recommendations into practice.

Five years later, in short, as we review progress, it is clear that Cairo is working. Here in the U.S., Cairo has helped the way we shape domestic and foreign programs and policies. And we are seeing a difference.

Domestically, we have increased government funding for U.S. family planning and other reproductive health services, and have since witnessed a 12 percent decline in teen pregnancies and a similar reduction in recourse to abortion. Other innovative programs are working to stop domestic violence and build girl's self-esteem.

Overseas, since Cairo, the U.S., through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has spent more than \$5.5 billion dollars on bilateral health and population programs and on women's empowerment programs. This assistance supports programs and services in more than 100 countries throughout the developing world.

Accomplishments include:

- Increased access to and improved quality of reproductive health services, including family planning, maternal health and HIV/AIDS prevention.
- New initiatives in girls' and women's education; and
- Strengthened partnerships with NGOs to integrate reproductive health and women's empowerment activities into community development programs.

The U.S. has also provided significant support to international organizations to achieve these aims. In addition, via the recent G-7 Cologne Agreement, the U.S. will provide debt relief to help free funds for some developing nations that they can use to deliver expanded social services to their citizens.

The U.S. private sector has increased its support as well. Since Cairo, U.S. foundations have more than tripled their assistance to population and related programs. An outstanding increase.

As a result of these and other efforts, millions of families are able to achieve their reproductive goals and have healthier children. More women are able to advance economically, socially and politically. And reduced population pressures permit countries to invest more resources in education, health, the environment and other areas that contribute to an improved quality of life.

#### **The U.S. Commitment to Future Challenges.**

Challenges remain, however. The U.S. has identified priorities to ensure that the Cairo goals become a reality, both at home and abroad.

#### **The Empowerment of Women and Girls**

- Women's empowerment is a cornerstone of Cairo. The population and development challenge will not be solved until women are afforded equal opportunity to education, jobs, health care, legal rights and political participation. When women can make the decisions that affect their lives, they tend to have smaller, healthier and better-educated families. In turn, **access** to family planning and reproductive rights is an important component of women's self-determination. Without the ability to plan and space her children, a woman may find it difficult, if not impossible, to finish her education or plan for her future.
- The U.S. is committed to ensuring gender equity and equality. A priority is to close the gender gap in education. Of the 960 million adults in the world who cannot read or write, two-thirds are female. In addition, high priority will be given to initiatives that advance women's political participation, legal rights and economic status; and prevent violence against women, including female genital mutilation, domestic violence and sex-trafficking.

### ***Reproductive Health Services: Improving Quality and Access***

- More than 150 million married couples in the developing world still want to space or limit childbearing but do not have access to modern methods of contraception. The number of reproductive age couples is expected to increase by at least 15 million each year. The need is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, where in some countries, one in three married women want to space or limit births but are not using family planning.
- The U.S. will continue to work to expand access to, and quality of, family planning and other reproductive health services. Vital to this objective is ensuring that women and men have the widest possible choice of modern contraceptive methods available to them. We will also work to improve further the quality of care in reproductive health services and to strengthen the linkages between reproductive health and child survival programs.

### ***Reducing Maternal Mortality***

- Lack of access to family planning and reproductive health services also leads to increased maternal deaths. On average, women in the developing world are more than **200** times more likely to die during childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than women in the developed world.
- The U.S. will continue to support safe motherhood initiatives and other community-based efforts to address such needs as pre-natal care, maternal nutrition and training for mid-wives. At home, we will work to close the gap in maternal mortality rates between black and Caucasian women.
- Internationally, complications from unsafe abortions are one of the leading causes of maternal mortality, resulting in 75,000 preventable deaths a year. The U.S. will work to ensure that where abortions are legal, they are safe and accessible, with an emphasis on scaling-up promising post-abortion care initiatives.

### ***Preventing the Spread of HIV/AIDS***

- An estimated 33 million people worldwide are currently living with HIV/AIDS, and that number grows by 16,000 every single day. Young people -- especially women -- are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. About half of new HIV infections are in young people aged 15-24, the range in which most people start their sexual lives.
- The U.S. will continue to help reduce HIV/AIDS rates by emphasizing preventive approaches that are focused on young people and other high-risk groups.

### ***Meeting the Needs of Young People***

- History's largest generation of young people -- over 1 billion aged 15-24 -- have already entered or will soon begin their reproductive lives. But in many countries, education, health care and family services are inadequate. Our ability to build vital economies, vibrant societies and a better future for all depends on actions we take now to meet the health and development needs of this most important generation.
- The U.S. will continue to support, design and implement development and health programs -- including sexual and reproductive health programs -- with and for youth that involve the active support of parents and other community members -- including religious leaders, health officials, teachers, policy makers, and the media.

### ***Mobilizing Resources and Political Will***

- At Cairo, the international community agreed that the wealthy nations would provide a third of the estimated \$17 billion needed in the year 2000 to provide basic reproductive health care in the developing world. Almost all countries have fallen short of their commitments, particularly the industrialized nations.
- The U.S. remains the largest bilateral donor of reproductive health assistance, but we are woefully aware that we have not met our financial commitments.
- I am happy to report that the Clinton Administration has proposed a \$25 million contribution to UNFPA and a substantial increase for USAID for fiscal year 2000, and we are optimistic that our Congress will grant these requests. We are also pushing hard for payment of UN arrears.
- In our ongoing effort to mobilize resources, we will continue to work to strengthen the involvement and commitment from private businesses and foundations.

### ***Strengthening Partnerships***

- Cairo is doable. Essential to its implementation are partnerships -  
- between family members, men and women, young people, the public and private sectors, and at the community, national and international level. Indeed, our own successes would not have been possible without the involvement of NGOs, health professionals, policy makers, religious leaders, the media, businesses, foundations, other donors and other governments.

- An utmost priority for the U.S. is to continue building and strengthening these partnerships. Only then can we ensure that Cairo's promise becomes a reality. And, Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to applaud the **UN** for involving NGOs and youth in these proceedings. The U.S. has a youth representative on our delegation, as well as several NGOs. And I understand 10 other country delegations have included a youth representative as well.
- Most of all, we thank the UN for this historic opportunity to reaffirm our nation's commitment to Cairo.

Thank you Mr. President.

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