



**STATEMENT BY HON'BLE MR. E. AHAMED, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, ON AGENDA ITEM 45: INTEGRATED AND
COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE
OUTCOMES OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND
SUMMITS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS:
COMMEMORATION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
ON OCTOBER 14, 2004**

Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to participate in this event to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. We commend the Secretariat for the report on the review and appraisal of the progress made in achieving the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference, prepared for this occasion. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77.

The central theme of the International Conference was to forge a balance among population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The objective of the Agreement reached at the Conference was to raise the quality of life and the well-being of human beings and to promote human development. The Programme of Action, in our view, rightly emphasised the need to integrate population concerns fully into development strategies and planning, taking into account the inter-relationship of population issues with the goals of poverty eradication, food security, adequate shelter, productive employment and basic services for all.

The rate of population growth over the past decade has been higher in the poorer nations of the world, with four out of every five persons living in the less developed regions in 2004, and also higher within the poorer and disadvantaged sections of society. The emphasis on sustained economic growth and sustainable development in the Programme of Action becomes, therefore, extremely relevant.

Mr. President,

India formulated a national family planning programme as early as in 1952, with the objective of stabilising the population at the level consistent with the requirements

of growth of the national economy. The technological advances and improved quality and coverage of health care resulted in rapid fall in crude death rate in India from 25 in 1951-61 to 10 in 1991 and to 8 in 2002. In contrast, reduction in the crude birth rate has been less steep, declining from 41 in 1951-61 to 30 in 1991 and 25 in 2002. As a result, the annual exponential population growth rate was over 2% in the period 1961-1991. But during 1991-2001, population growth decelerated below 2% for the first time in four decades, though not uniformly across the country.

The International Conference has had a profound impact on India's policy related to population stabilisation, as agreed and unanimously endorsed by our Parliament. The commitments contained in the Programme of Action find full reflection in our National Population Policy. India has a strong political commitment to achieving population stabilisation goals. A comprehensive population policy, laying down 14 socio-demographic goals and several operational strategies has been unanimously endorsed by our national Parliament. A National Population Commission has been established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. A National Population Stabilisation Fund has been constituted, with the Prime Minister as its Chairperson, and with an initial corpus of Rs.1 billion or approximately \$ 20 million. Mobilisation of resources from the private sector for undertaking several initiatives in the under-served areas, where access to health-care continues to be inadequate, is also envisaged. An Empowered Action Group (EAG) has been specially set up to design and formulate programmes, both in terms of geographic and thematic areas, with a special focus on the needs and themes that require further attention.



Population policies in India are based on the recognition of the right of every woman to decide for herself the number of children she wants and when, while simultaneously acknowledging that male participation is equally critical. We neither evaluate our programmes based on pre-determined targets, nor encourage use of any coercive measures or inducements.

The 2001 census showed that the literacy rate in the last decade has gone up from 64.1% to 75.9% for men and from 39.3% to 54.2% for women. Progress in

education contributes to reduction in fertility, morbidity and mortality rates as well as the empowerment of women. Education also provides access to information. The linkages among education, expanding markets and income, and reduction in fertility are significant for countries like ours.

Mr. President,

The Millennium Development Goals aimed at reducing global poverty and hunger by half by 2015. The Secretary General has pointed out that despite some setbacks in selected countries, progress has been made in reducing poverty rates, though not in reducing the absolute number of poor persons. Despite sustained increases in food supply globally, the number of under-nourished people has grown since 1995, as food insecurity increased in many of the poorest countries. India has made substantial progress on growth and poverty reduction over the past decade. Progress has also been made in improving literacy, enrolment, completion and gender balance in primary education. According to one estimate, with the current trends, India will comfortably achieve its targets in both income and food security. The Government of India is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This commitment has been most recently illustrated in the Government of India's budget for the year 2004 –05.

Mr. President,

The central theme of Cairo Conference was to forge a balance among population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The balance was based on the premise that actions by governments of developing countries would be matched by assistance from the donor community. The international assistance and support that was promised to be provided to the developing countries has fallen short. The Secretary-General has pointed out in his report that in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action, continued efforts and commitment are needed to mobilise sufficient human and financial resources. On this 10th anniversary of the International Conference, nations of the world, developed and developing, need to reiterate the resolve to achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action. Sustained, continued and enhanced assistance from the international community is needed to help achieve our common desired objective.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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