



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. DR. JOHN W. ASHE, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE 41ST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (New York, 7 April 2008)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues,

The Group of 77 and China would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the bureau on your election to lead this 41st session of the Commission on Population and Development. Be assured that the G77 and China will work cooperatively toward a successful conclusion of our work over the next several days.

We thank the Secretariat for the preparation and presentation of the reports submitted to aid our debate on agenda items 3, 4 and 5.

Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development

Mr. Chairman,

The reports contained in documents 2008/3 and 2008/4, force us to consider the notion that urban population growth should be seen as a positive factor contributing to better development rather than the prevailing belief that population growth has harmful social and environmental consequences and should be slowed down at all costs. The G77 and China believes that this latest viewpoint should be the subject of greater debate. Moreover, we question whether this transition prevails in developed or developing countries, particularly since the poor make up a large proportion of urban growth in developing countries, and poverty is currently increasing faster in cities than in rural areas.

Developing countries face tremendous challenges associated with urbanization and the formation of viable cities - the provision of adequate housing, education and medical services; infrastructure development, including communications, advanced transportation and road systems; provision of sewage, water and electrical services; and the technical and resource capacity to bring it all to fruition. The G77 and China is concerned that the documentation before the Commission focuses on the inevitability of urbanization, without addressing the steps necessary to arrive at truly sustainable urban growth. The reports also fail to address the consequences for rural areas as a result of rapid urbanization. The impact of which can be devastating to rural communities, especially as the growth of cities is occurring now at a much faster pace in developing countries than was the case during the first wave of urbanization that took place in the now developed countries of the world.

The Group notes the position that increased urban growth is more often a result of natural increase - or a greater number of births than deaths - rather than a consequence of migration.

Nevertheless, unemployment, poverty and hunger are some other causes of accelerated migration from rural to urban areas in developing countries, which could affect the economic and social stability of many countries and regions. We therefore reaffirm Principle 7 of the ICPD Programme of Action, which states that poverty eradication is "an indispensable requirement" to achieve

sustainable development and to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world especially those living in rural areas in developing countries.

Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development

Mr. Chairman,

As we approach 2015, we cannot look at follow-up of the International Conference on Population and Development without addressing the linkages between implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the achievement of the other internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

The objectives and recommended actions of the ICPD Programme of Action address the critical challenges and interrelationships between population and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development. Future prospects for economic growth, poverty eradication, population stabilization and environmental sustainability will be shaped largely by our ability to realize the MDGs.

The commitment to issues of development expressed in Cairo, and repeated at other major United Nations conferences and summits, continues to be crucial for the achievement of a more just and equitable enabling international environment for developing countries. The Group of 77 and China must emphasize that trade imbalances, debt burdens, fiscal austerity measures, inadequate investment, the lack of new and innovative sources of financing, among other issues, continue to be major obstacles for developing countries to overcome and help to explain why so many of our countries are not on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

The Programme of Action also points out that mobilization of adequate resources at the national level as well as new and additional resources to developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources is critical for implementation of the actions contained therein. The G77 and China is pleased with the significant increase in funding for HIV/AIDS activities within the last several years, but hastens to draw attention to the need for the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Full implementation of the Programme of Action, particularly the reproductive health goals, has a direct impact on the ability to achieve the MDGs linked to health and social and economic outcomes in the areas of children, mothers, HIV/AIDS, gender, poverty and employment. In the context of population and development, those MDG targets aimed at reducing by half the proportion of people living in poverty by 2015 and at achieving significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020, are even more significant.

Given the importance of the link between population and development and the MDGs, the G77 and China looks forward to the comprehensive discussions scheduled to take place on this issue during the 42nd session of the Commission, and welcomes the commitment of the President of the General Assembly to track, annually, our progress towards achieving the MDG targets.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the G77 and China wishes to commend the work of the UN Population Division and the role it plays in follow-up of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We also wish to acknowledge the United Nations Population Fund for its continued support to building the capacity of developing countries for population planning and management activities

including in the areas of national policy formulation, data collection, research and advocacy.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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