



**STATEMENT BY
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CONFERENCE FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT,
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Mr. Chairman, I would like to personally thank you on behalf of WEDO and the Women's Caucus for your openness and making the enormous participation of NGOs possible throughout this process. I welcome the opportunity to address this body at the start of the last preparatory committee meeting before Cairo. I must congratulate Secretary-General Nafis Sadik and her team for their open, inclusive and participatory process. As a representative of a global network of women activists, we depend upon such leadership to ensure that our voices are heard and our views get incorporated into the official deliberations.

I'd like to stop a minute and reflect on the fact that we are talking about the most personal subject in the most public of forums. We're talking about our lives. Women every where want their cries heard. Their cries for recognition of our needs, our fears and aspirations. Their cries for personal dignity and bodily integrity. Their cries for health. Their cries for full participation in the decisions that affect their lives. That's a tremendous burden on this body. It's also a tremendous opportunity that this body carries to address the needs of all people, especially the female half of the population.

We were greatly encouraged by our first reading of the current draft document of the Programme of Action. There are many important provisions which reflect a greater understanding of our perspectives on population and development issues and an agenda for our future that is more acceptable to women around the world.

The document does recognize the following:

- that population control strategies that treat women as targets and often end up being coercive do not work;
- that successful development strategies are the best means of a country achieving its desired population outcome and that requires the active promotion of gender equity, the elimination of political, legal and social barriers to gender equality, increased economic opportunity for women, wider educational opportunity for all, especially for girls, and comprehensive and integrated primary health care, and sexual and reproductive health services, including the widest range of non-coercive family planning services, and the right to abortion.

The document does not sufficiently recognize that consumption patterns of non-renewable and endangered resources, albeit by increasing numbers of people, is one of the most significant contributors to long-term environmental degradation, and that in the short-run, the greater

sources of environmental degradation stem, not from the poorest billion of the planet, but from unworkable models of development, specifically from military and industrial toxics and pollution and unresponsive economic structures.

Indeed, the pollution generated by the poorest one-fifth is not the problem; rather it is the "luxury emissions of the rich" that exceed the earth's ability to absorb such wastes. While some people have talked at length of the "population bomb or explosion," we have not sufficiently addressed the consumption "bomb" or "explosion."

To talk about "population policies" per se has too often resulted in forgetting to address the underlying causes of poverty and environmental degradation. Instead, we rapidly turn to the ways to control fertility. Money cannot solely be directed to programs that deliver family planning services, important as that is. Any additional resources for programs to educate girls or provide reproductive health services get tagged onto this engine. They are all seen as means to an end.

And it is this instrumentalist approach to controlling women's bodies that we fundamentally object to and are working to change. These are consequences of women not having and being able to exercise full human rights.

We must ask the means-end question because the rhetoric in this document is better and better. In fact, it's getting very good. But have the ends changed? Have we achieved a new shared understanding that populationist ends are the wrong end? Is women's equality a fundamental end, in and of itself? Or is the only reason any government or international agency now spends an additional dollar to educate a girl simply to persuade her to have fewer children? Are these concessions to "women's empowerment" just more words, more lip-service, or just more carrots?

Let us begin a new quest for balance, for restoring health and creating healthy communities. The central agenda for the Cairo conference is launching actions that will realize our goal of equitable sustainable development.

In fact, as government delegations echoed during the first PrepCom for the World Summit on Social Development, we've had more than 30 years of "sustained economic growth." See where we've come. At the same time, we've also experienced increased poverty and stratification. And we have experienced years of "jobless growth" -- sustained economic growth without adding more employment. We cannot solve the underlying structural problems of poverty and inequality through more growth, hoping that the benefits of growth trickles down to those in need.

So, what should we emphasize in Cairo?

All have agreed we must collectively address the challenge of how to meet the real unmet demand and need of billions of people for simple human dignity and basic human rights.

How do we meet the unmet demand and need by the female half of our population for power over their lives, for control over their bodies, for physical and emotional security, for education and economic independence that enables the realization of one's human potential?

And how do we meet the unmet consumption demand and need for food, for shelter, for education, for jobs, for health care for those who do not have it.

Yes, there is unmet need for many consumer products, including products that enable couples and individuals to control their own reproduction.

But we would miss the historic significance of Cairo if we limited our understanding of "unmet need" to condoms, pills, IUDs and new methods and products. ICPD should not be reduced solely to a market analysis of birth control products and publicly-subsidized research, development and marketing campaigns.

The political significance of this discussion must be solidly grounded in a fundamental appreciation and understanding of the social justice and sustainable development issues.

As Pat Hynes writes in her book, Taking Population Out of the Equation, "It's a pity ... that the social ideals of equity and justice are a humanistic afterword to a numerical analysis of humans in the world, rather than beacons of enlightenment that would recast the analysis up front. The quest for a sustainable world has to originate from a passion for justice, not merely conclude with an appeal to truth and love, Scotch taped like some ethical appendage onto a quantitative input-output model of humans in the world."

We support increased development assistance to women's empowerment programs, greater economic opportunity for women particularly that which leads to building assets and economic independence. We support greater resources for women and girls education -- and also education for men and boys particularly in areas such as peace studies, ending violence against women, responsibility for sexuality, family and reproduction.

We support greater allocations for health care, and in that context, sexual and reproductive health care services. And within that framework, the widest range of non-coercive family planning services including safe and affordable abortion services. Treatment and detection of STDs/HIV and AIDS merits the greatest attention. What we reject is the "tail wagging the dog" or disproportionate allocations and priority, while other basic needs are neglected or given short shrift.

We support the idea of funding international networks and coalitions to monitor and act against abuses of population and family planning programs, including sterilization abuse and harmful side effects of different technologies or methods.

We support the idea of rapidly increasing the status of women; of urgently meeting our unmet demand and need for basic human rights. We support efforts to end domestic violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking in women and all other forms of violence against women.

We support the idea of aggressive research on appropriate male contraceptive technology.

We support adopting standards for evaluating contraceptive technology by drawing on the criteria for appropriate technology which has been developed by grassroots activists in development to include: democratic, low technology, low cost, participatory, reversible, nontoxic, local and de-linked from multinational interests, integrative.

We support efforts to change the way people live on the planet, not just the words we use to describe it. We applaud any and every initiative by those more developed countries that give the kinds of resources needed such as the United States, the Europe Union, the Nordics, Japan and other industrialized or industrializing nations to engage in a public dialogue on consumerism and consumption and to increase the resources necessary for a liveable world.

We ask for your continued openness to listen and engage with women from NGOs around the world during this final negotiating session. Hearing their cries, listening to their needs, believing in their potential. The stakes are high for us. We care deeply and passionately about these issues for ourselves and future generations and we look to you in this great body to soften their cries and to begin to act on their needs. Thank you.

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