

REMARKS OF BILLIE A. MILLER,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE NGO PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE ICPD
APRIL 4, 1994

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to address this plenary session of the Third Preparatory Committee meeting for the ICPD. I too would wish to welcome you all, especially the NGO participants from around the world, both from the developing and the developed countries who number over 1200 individuals representing almost 500 NGOs. I am personally heartened to see that so many of our colleagues from the NGOs in Egypt are here today and I look forward to working with them on the details for the NGO Forum in Cairo. This significant turn-out, I am sure, indicates the interest and the commitment of the NGO community toward these crucial issues.

The role of NGOs in these processes is important and legitimate particularly in the realm of population and development. NGOs have been PIONEERS in every sense of the word. They continue to act where governments either cannot, or will not; they provide the information and the hands-on experience from the level of the community -- the grassroots.

NGOs have participated fully in preparatory work for this Conference -- they have been included on expert group meetings, roundtables, on delegations to Prepcoms, and have acted as advisors to Governments with respect to their national reports and their positions for this Prepcom. At this forum, NGOs stand ready to consult and act as resource persons in matters of concepts, work experience and language, and in any other way where they might be useful.

At the end of the day, NGOs will be the executing agencies for the imperatives and programs which will come out of Cairo. Already registered with the NGO Planning Committee are over 1200 organizations who are following these preparations and proceedings-- we expect 6000 - 7000 representatives will attend the NGO Forum and the ICPD in Cairo.

While we are still negotiating with the Government of Egypt, I am pleased to share with you the news that Egypt will provide the National Stadium, rent and utility-free, in addition to security and maintenance services. I think that NGOs will find a comfortable home at the Stadium. On behalf of the NGO community, I would like to thank the generous Governments who have already made financial commitments to the support of the NGO Forum in Cairo. Specifically, our thanks to the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the European Union. I know many governments are still considering support for this important parallel Forum to the ICPD and we look forward to raising an additional eight hundred thousand dollars to cover the costs of interpreters, interpretation equipment, and audio-visual equipment rental, so that NGOs from all regions can participate fully. We look forward to working with all of you here in the next three weeks and in Cairo, Inshallah.