



SWISS CONFEDERATION

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Address by  
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Head of the Swiss Delegation

at the

International Conference on Population and Development  
Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

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Compared with the 1974 Bucharest and 1984 Mexico City Conferences, the Cairo Conference on Population and Development is situated in a much wider context - something we regard as a significant step forward. In the aftermath of the 1992 Rio Conference, demographic questions are not only better positioned within the framework of sustainable development, they also take account of many aspects of social development.

We particularly appreciate that the draft document clearly recalls North-South interdependence and addresses the industrialized countries just as much as the developing countries. As the representative of an industrialized country I must underline that the industrialized countries bear a weighty responsibility. With their methods of production and consumption, they are currently the principal causes for the environmental imbalances affecting the entire planet. They also determine to a very large extent the economic conditions within whose framework the developing countries have to find a solution to their problems.

The fact remains that rapid population growth is often a major impediment to improving people's living conditions. In a way, rapid population growth is both a cause and a consequence of social and human under-development. As we are involved in international cooperation to eliminate poverty, it is very useful for us to discuss, in this forum, the best ways and means of taking account of this aspect of development.

From this point of view, we feel that the ultimate aim of international cooperation should be constantly kept in mind - placing the economy at the service of mankind to promote the best possible development of every individual. Any policy of cooperation, in the demographic field also, must therefore be based on the fundamental ethical values of respect for human dignity and freedom. A special consideration must be given to the situation of women in society. We must achieve full equality between women and men in all aspects of life. The elimination of discriminations is a first step in that direction. The objective must

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Greater efforts must therefore be made than in the past to strengthen respect for human rights, especially respect for ethnic minorities, to improve the management of public affairs and to support economic and social development. We must at the same time avoid any form of discrimination towards migrants, facilitate their integration and participation in their new country, whatever the reasons are for which they left their country of origin. This is a task for citizens, non-governmental organisations, the States and the international community.

To sum up, Switzerland is ready to commit itself:

1. to increase the part of its official development aid (ODA) in support to social development (health, education, advancement of women's issues),
2. to strive to achieve ODA's objective as announced in Rio, in spite of the considerable budgetary restrictions a small federal State like ours has to face these days,
3. to engage, together with its partners from developing countries, in a policy dialogue on the questions of population, whenever desirable and possible,
4. to continue the dialogue and cooperation between Swiss Authorities and civil society on the Conference's themes.
5. to participate actively in the international coordinated action which will be necessary to ensure the follow-up of the Conference.

I cannot conclude without thanking all those who helped in the preparation of this important Conference, in particular the Egyptian authorities who have extended such magnificent hospitality to us all. We must also give due credit to the contribution of the non-governmental organisations, above all the women's organizations, which have done much to ensure that our approach is firmly founded on social and cultural reality and have helped us to grasp the importance of the role played by women. These non-governmental organizations will play a decisive part in implementing the results of this Conference. Finally, our thanks go to Mrs. Nafis Sadik and to the Conference's Secretariat, who have given the international community the basis for this Conference.