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Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Preparatory Committee for the
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New York
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UNICEF is delighted to have the opportunity to address this important meeting. Let me begin by underlining what many have already said: the International Conference on Population and Development comes at a critical time. Indeed, if we seize the opportunities, the 1990s can be the decisive decade for accelerating broad-based human development, making a start on Agenda 21, and reducing the world's population growth to levels that are sustainable.

May I say also that I am particularly pleased that UNICEF's statement comes at this stage in the Meeting. We have had more than two weeks of discussion, negotiation, drafting and re-drafting of the Programme of Action. And, we have managed to reach agreement on a number of important issues: the positive links between child survival, basic education and family planning, actions for the girl child, the special health needs of women and young people, the need to address overconsumption in developed countries, the links between population growth, poverty and environmental degradation and the vital need to support the empowerment of women, as part of any sound population policy. Of course, some differences remain. But our experience in UNICEF is that, even on the most difficult issues, we can usually find ways of working effectively together, particularly if we emphasize the objective we have in common and the complementarity of our different mandates and approaches.

There are, of course, many good reasons for formulating clear population policies and encouraging lower fertility rates. UNICEF has long recognized that birth spacing not only accelerates the transition to sustainable development, it is also enormously beneficial to the health and well-being of children and women. This has been UNICEF's experience with safe motherhood programmes which we have supported jointly with WHO and UNFPA, with increasing success in India, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

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But the significance of the ICPD goes beyond the important questions surrounding population. Over the next eighteen months, the international community will gather at three international conferences which, together, give us an historic opportunity to confront some of human society's most urgent problems.

UNICEF believes that these three conferences -- which begin with the ICPD in September and include the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women -- must be viewed together. Each tackles a range of problems that are intricately connected. It is impossible to separate the causes and the effects of rapid population growth, deepening poverty, child mortality, lack of education and persistent gender discrimination from one another. Thus, finding lasting solutions to any one set of problems requires us, at the same time, to address the other four. In short, population policy, child survival, education and gender equality are essential elements of sustainable human development.

The Preparatory Committee Meeting: Maintaining a Broad Perspective on Population Issues

The discussions -- formal and informal -- during this meeting of the Preparatory Committee have provided many signs that we are well on our way to an extremely productive conference in September. We have been particularly pleased to see that NGOs, including those which represent women and young people, are playing such a vital role in this meeting as they have done throughout the ICPD preparatory process. Let me extend UNICEF's congratulations and warm thanks to Dr Sadik, whose enormous personal prestige and inspiring leadership has made this possible.

The progress we have already made in population policy and action in many countries is due in very large part to the efforts of women. Further progress clearly depends on maintaining this leadership role for women as well as guaranteeing that young people -- who make up such a large percentage of the population in developing countries -- have access to the information and services they require to make sound choices .

Another encouraging element from this Preparatory Meeting is the growing attention being paid to the role of men. Encouraging male family members to take a more active and responsible role in family planning, and in the responsibilities of parenthood more generally, is a critical component of our efforts to raise the status of women and to improve the well-being of children and women worldwide.

UNICEF also welcomes the attention many delegates have paid to the effect structural adjustment programmes on countries' efforts to promote sound population policies. UNICEF has long been a vigorous participant in the debate over adjustment. Since the mid-1980s, we have advocated "Adjustment With a Human Face". This approach urges that the process of adjustment be focussed on accelerating broad-based, long-term human development and that, however severe the adjustment, it strengthens, not weakens, education, health and family planning services. In addition, adjustment policy objectives should include, in the short-term, protecting vulnerable groups from possible negative effects of adjustment. Finally, the adjustment process must incorporate efforts to monitor not only the key economic indicators like GDP growth, inflation, balance of payments and budget deficits, but also the important development indicators like nutrition, food balances and the adequacy of social services. With so many countries currently undergoing adjustment, it is vital that we understand how that process is affecting other development efforts.

Perhaps the most heartening aspect of this Preparatory Meeting has been the strong support for a more comprehensive, holistic conception of population issues and policies. This broader understanding goes far beyond family planning. It recognizes that if we are to manage the transition to lower fertility and sustainable population growth rates, we must promote the empowerment of women and guarantee girls' and women's access to basic services, particularly education, while increasing parents' confidence in the survival of their children.

For us in UNICEF, this broader approach is extremely attractive for three reasons. First, reflects the world's extraordinary shift in attitudes around gender. In the span of only a few decades, women have made remarkable advances in virtually all facets of life. Certainly the progress is uneven among countries. And, we are still a long way from a world in which equality between women and men, girls and boys is a familiar fact of life. Still, as the proceedings of this meeting demonstrate, today's women have open to them an expanding range of opportunities -- in the labour force and in public life particularly -- which, only a generation ago, seemed vastly out of reach.

Second, this broader conception of population reflects not only a shift in values in favour of gender equality, but a stronger ethical foundation for development, firmly grounded in human rights. Without a clear ethical framework, development is meaningless. That is why UNICEF welcomes this focus on ethics, which is emerging from the growing international acceptance of our principal human rights instruments -- the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It gives rights, codified in international law, an important new role in defining the scope and content of development efforts. Moreover, this evolution in our conception of development -- from the expression of needs to the assertion of claims, to the articulation of rights to the promulgation of laws and finally to the adoption of policies that give real form to these new laws -- is establishing new standards to which national and international development actors will be held accountable.

The third reason UNICEF is so sympathetic to this more comprehensive notion of population issues and policy is that it mirrors so closely our own view that the mutually reinforcing relationships among rapid population growth, grinding poverty and environmental degradation constitute a kind of downward spiral that impedes development. UNICEF's Executive Board explicitly recognized these complex relationships in a series of resolutions adopted in the last few years. These resolutions call on UNICEF to work closely and in a complementary manner with our sister UN agencies -- UNFPA, WHO and UNESCO in particular -- and with the NGO community.

The interplay between poverty, population growth and environmental degradation, which we call the "PPE spiral", was given careful attention in the most recent issue of the State of the World's Children report. The argument is straightforward: poverty, population growth and environmental decay are three interacting elements of one problem. Poverty, in the form of high child death rates, lack of security in illness and old age, lack of water supply, fuel and labour-saving devices, all encourage parents to have many children. At the same time, women's low status, their lack of education, and parents' lack of confidence in the future leads to an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness which undermines family planning efforts. In turn, population pressures exacerbate the problems of unemployment, low wages, landlessness and overstretched demand social services. Rapid population growth also leads to greater use of marginal lands, soil erosion, and more migration to overcrowded shanty towns. Deepening poverty and high population growth rates together mean that short-term exploitation of the environment -- meeting today's needs -- takes priority over long term environmental preservation. In its turn, environmental decay evidenced by soil erosion, salination and flooding leads to declining yields, falling employment and lower incomes.

UNICEF believes that the way to break out of the PPE spiral is to through a series of synergistic interventions for children and women in the areas of health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation and family planning. All of these interventions should give special attention to the needs of women and girls.

And, they must form part of a broader effort to overcome the worst manifestations of poverty and to promote the empowerment of women.

This is the principal argument behind the Child Survival Revolution. And, I am pleased to say that it is entirely consistent with the new concept of population policy which has been so strongly endorsed at this meeting.

Draft Programme of Action

Let me turn now to the Draft Programme of Action for the Conference. UNICEF was very pleased to participate informally in its preparation. From our perspective, it is a most thorough and comprehensive document. We were particularly pleased to note that the Draft Programme which we had before us at the start of this Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the Year 2000 goals for children and women, which were adopted by the World Summit for Children and UNCED. These goals should be viewed as a stepping stone to achieving the ICPD goals for the year 2015.

UNICEF is also glad to see that the Draft Programme of Action recognizes that the broad objectives of population and development policy should be pursued through a series of interrelated interventions, which include: enhancing the role and status of women, promoting safe motherhood, supporting basic education and literacy, especially for girls, promoting exclusive breastfeeding for at least the first four months, information, education and communication in support of population policies, equal development opportunities for girls, including equal access to education and other basic services and protection from harmful traditional practices and promoting more responsible behaviour and parenthood on the part of male family members.

In this International Year of the Family, it is also gratifying to see that the Draft Programme of Action acknowledges that families in all countries are under enormous stress and that they require much stronger support from governments, community groups and from each other.

Action Still Needed

As we come to the end of this Meeting and move forward to Cairo, UNICEF would like to see us take further action in the following areas:

First, we need to include in the Programme of Action, strong support for goals which the international community has already adopted in other forums. In the course of this Meeting, we have had very vigorous debates on the subject of goals. In UNICEF's experience, clear, feasible, time-bound and measurable goals are vital both to setting priorities and for putting in place an

effective system for monitoring and follow-up. In the three and a half years since the World Summit for Children was held, these broader benefits of setting and using goals have been demonstrated in country after country. It would be very unfortunate indeed if the ICPD were to question not only the value of setting goals but also the value of those goals -- in health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation and family planning -- the international community has already adopted at the World Summit for Children and reaffirmed in Agenda 21 at Rio. Indeed, we in UNICEF would hope the vital goals for education, as formulated at Jomtien, and reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children and in Rio, could be listed specifically within the Programme of Action. These key goals read, "By the year 2000 [to achieve] universal access to basic education and [effective] completion of primary education by at least 80 percent of primary school-age children." Since two thirds of the out-of-school children today are girls, I can think of no more effective measure for long-term progress in the broad field of population than the achievement of this goal.

Second, our discussions in Cairo and the final Programme of Action need to reaffirm that actions to reduce maternal and child mortality and to improve child growth and development are mutually reinforcing and synergistic with actions to reduce fertility. In other words, promoting child survival and development not only supports, but is essential for achieving, the goals of sustainable population policy.

Third, the Programme of Action needs explicitly to identify key elements of national and international action to ensure these goals are met. These could include more comprehensive debt relief, especially for the poorest countries, country-level "compacts" between developing countries and donors and the "20/20" initiative (which calls on developing country governments and donors to allocate a minimum of 20 percent of their domestic and ODA budgets, respectively, to **human development priorities**, including those aimed at reducing fertility and mortality rates and improving child growth and development. In this connection, permit me to reiterate that funding secured through "20/20" should be devoted to **human development priorities** (e.g. primary education, primary health care, family planning, nutrition, water supply and sanitation for rural and urban slum areas etc) in particular and not to the "social sector" in general, as the text in the Draft Programme of Action currently reads.

Fourth, the Conference needs to promote greater interagency collaboration in support of family planning and population policies with each agency focussing on the areas of its mandate and comparative advantage, in a broadly complementary manner.

Fifth, we all need to view the ICPD -- together with the World Summit for Children, the Earth Summit, World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women -- as part of an ongoing effort by the international community to come to grips with the most urgent problems facing human society today. Individually and together, these conferences need to inspire and reflect a new global commitment to development.

Let me conclude by acknowledging that remarkable progress that has already been made in moving toward sustainable population growth rates. Total fertility rates in the developing world have now fallen by half the distance between what they were in 1965-1970 and what is required to provide the conditions for stable population growth. This reduction is overwhelmingly centered in countries and regions which are making simultaneous breakthroughs in child survival, basic education and family planning. In addition, we now have a comprehensive approach to population policies which recognizes that reducing fertility rates requires much more than family planning. It requires deliberate action to promote the well-being and empowerment of women and girls. And, it requires that we address population as part of a broader effort to reduce poverty and to promote sustainable development.

Our discussions during this Preparatory Committee meeting have been vigorous and even passionate. To me this only reaffirms that we are discussing issues which are vitally important to all of us. With so much at stake, UNICEF pleads that we do all that is required to emerge from Cairo with Programmes of Action worthy of our best efforts. In so doing, we can both set a very high standard for the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women and help lay the foundation for a more dynamic 21st century.

Thank you.