



AUSTRALIA

TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR
THE OVERALL REVIEW AND
APPRAISAL OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT

STATEMENT BY

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FOR RECONCILIATION

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MR PRESIDENT

AUSTRALIA STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT ADOPTED AT THE CAIRO CONFERENCE IN 1994.

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THIS SPECIAL SESSION IS TO TAKE STOCK OF PROGRESS AND TO IDENTIFY POLICIES AND PRACTICES WHICH HELP TO ADVANCE THE CAIRO PROGRAMME OF ACTION, IN LINE WITH THE CAIRO PRINCIPLES. WE WOULD NOT WISH TO SEE THESE PRINCIPLES ALTERED, EITHER EXPLICITLY OR IMPLICITLY, BY THIS FORUM.

AUSTRALIA IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE ONE OF THE WORLD'S HEALTHIEST POPULATIONS, AND AUSTRALIANS GENERALLY ARE GETTING HEALTHIER. THIS IS PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE RESOURCES WE ARE ABLE TO DEVOTE TO HEALTH, BUT IT ALSO STEMS FROM THE PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH TO HEALTH ISSUES TAKEN BY AUSTRALIANS AND BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PLAYS A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN FINANCING HEALTH CARE FOR AUSTRALIANS AND IN DEVELOPING NATIONAL HEALTH CARE POLICIES. AUSTRALIA HAS A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM OF HEALTH CARE FUNDING AND PROVISION, DRAWING ON BOTH GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

UNFORTUNATELY, INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS STILL HAVE A POORER HEALTH PROFILE THAN OTHER AUSTRALIANS, A MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. THAT IS WHY THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS HAS QUADRUPLED OVER THE PAST DECADE. THIS APPROACH HAS HELPED TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE MANY OF THE MAJOR CAUSES OF MORTALITY AMONGST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH, MEDICAL RESEARCH AND FUNDING BASED ON EVIDENCE OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS ARE ALSO VITAL PARTS OF AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH CARE POLICIES.

THROUGH ITS OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM, AUSTRALIA IS WORKING HARD TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT THE GOALS OF CAIRO. THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF AUSTRALIA'S AID IS TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO REDUCE POVERTY AND ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

- . HEALTH AND BASIC EDUCATION ARE PRIORITY SECTORS FOR AUSTRALIA'S AID.
- . OUR HEALTH ASSISTANCE POLICY AIMS TO IMPROVE BASIC HEALTH THROUGH INTEGRATED APPROACHES THAT GIVE PRIORITY TO WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH.

EXPENDITURE ON IMPROVING HEALTH HAS GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY TO ABOVE 10 PER CENT OF OUR TOTAL AID.

OUR AID SUPPORT FOR FAMILY PLANNING IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT INDIVIDUALS SHOULD DECIDE FREELY THE NUMBER AND SPACING OF THEIR CHILDREN AND HAVE THE INFORMATION AND THE MEANS TO EXERCISE THIS CHOICE.

WE OPPOSE, ABSOLUTELY, COERCION IN FAMILY PLANNING. VOLUNTARISM AND QUALITY OF CARE ARE BUILT INTO ALL OF THE POPULATION ACTIVITIES WE SUPPORT THROUGH THE AID PROGRAM. WE SPECIFICALLY TEST TO ENSURE THESE PRINCIPLES ARE OBSERVED.

- . THE CULTURAL, FAMILIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT IN WHICH REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMS OCCUR IS IMPORTANT.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF THESE FACTORS TO ENSURE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY.

- . OUR AID SUPPORT FOR BASIC EDUCATION IS ALSO INCREASING, ACCOUNTING NOW FOR 3 TO 4 PERCENT OF OUR TOTAL AID.

BASIC EDUCATION INCLUDES PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON IMPROVING GIRLS' EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND FEMALE LITERACY: FEMALE EDUCATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINABLE POPULATION GROWTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

- . AUSTRALIA'S AID POLICY ON GENDER EQUITY EMPHASISES THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN AS WELL AS WOMEN. WE HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE HEADWAY IN ENSURING GENDER ISSUES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ALL OUR AID-SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES.
- OUR AID PROGRAM PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND MEETS STRINGENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STANDARDS.

AUSTRALIA FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITIES OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES MUST BE PROTECTED. THIS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY NOT ONLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, BUT ALSO OF THOSE COUNTRIES THAT PROVIDE A SAFE HAVEN TO REFUGEES, OR A HOME TO MIGRANTS. WHERE THE INFLOW OF REFUGEES CREATES ECONOMIC HARDSHIP FOR RECEIVING COUNTRIES IT IS ALSO THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO OFFER THESE COUNTRIES TIMELY AND SUFFICIENT SUPPORT. WE BELIEVE MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH, AND HAVE ACCESS TO, ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES.

AUSTRALIA HAS RECENTLY ACTED UPON ITS COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING BOTH ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION TO REFUGEES.

- . AS PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN TRAGEDY OF THE REFUGEE OUTFLOW FROM KOSOVO, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING TEMPORARY SAFE HAVEN TO AROUND 4,000 DISPLACED KOSOVARS.
- . AUSTRALIA HAS AN OUTSTANDING HISTORY OF WELCOMING REFUGEES FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. HOWEVER, THE KOSOVO EXERCISE WAS UNPRECEDENTED AS IT HAS REQUIRED THE UPLIFTING OF THE EQUIVALENT OF OUR ANNUAL REFUGEE INTAKE WITHIN A SIX WEEK PERIOD.
- . THE KOSOVAR EVACUEES ARE BEING ACCOMMODATED IN FACILITIES AROUND AUSTRALIA. THEY ARE BEING PROVIDED WITH CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOOD, WITH CLOTHING, AND WITH BASIC TOILETRIES. THEY ARE ALSO BEING OFFERED TORTURE AND TRAUMA COUNSELLING, EDUCATION FOR THE CHILDREN, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR ADULTS, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND OTHER ESSENTIALS, INCLUDING A SMALL CASH ALLOWANCE.

THE KOSOVAR EVACUEES ARE ALSO RECEIVING MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE. THE HEALTH CARE SERVICES FOCUS ON IMMEDIATE HEALTH CARE NEEDS CONSISTENT WITH A SHORT TERM STAY. THESE INCLUDE MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH CARE AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES.

THE RECENT FINANCIAL CRISIS IN EAST ASIA PRESENTS ENORMOUS CHALLENGES FOR THE COUNTRIES MOST AFFECTED, FOR THE REGION AS A WHOLE AND FOR THE BROADER INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. SOCIAL IMPACTS ARE STILL UNFOLDING ALMOST TWO YEARS AFTER THE CRISIS

FIRST STRUCK, AFFECTING THE WELFARE OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

. WE RECOGNISE THE DIFFICULTY FOR COUNTRIES IN THE MIDST OF THE CRISIS TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL SECTOR SPENDING. WE COMMEND THOSE GOVERNMENTS THAT HAVE CONTINUED TO GIVE HIGH PRIORITY TO HEALTH AND EDUCATION SERVICES IN THE FACE OF BUDGETARY PRESSURE.

. AUSTRALIA CONTINUES TO MOBILISE SUBSTANTIAL AID TO HELP COUNTRIES ADDRESS THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE CRISIS AND TO ASSIST THEM IN RESTORING SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH. THIS COMPLEMENTS OUR SUPPORT FOR BROADER MULTILATERAL EFFORTS TO OVERCOME THE CRISIS AS WELL AS FOR INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REFORM.

THERE IS MORE TO BE DONE BY ALL OF US TO TURN THE CAIRO VISION INTO REALITY:

. MATERNAL MORTALITY, WHILE DECLINING, REMAINS UNACCEPTABLY HIGH AT OVER HALF A MILLION DEATHS A YEAR.

. ACHIEVING GENDER EQUITY, A CENTRAL PRINCIPLE OF THE CAIRO PROGRAM, REMAINS A CHALLENGE FOR ALL OF US.

. DEVELOPING CO-ORDINATED, INTEGRATED AND BALANCED APPROACHES TO HEALTH DELIVERY, INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE, REQUIRES GOOD TEAMWORK AND STRONG LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS SHARED VISION.

. PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED.

THIS MEETING SHOULD REINFORCE COMMITMENT TO THE CAIRO PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION. WITHOUT SUCH COMMITMENT, THE OBJECTIVES THAT WE SEEK TO ACHIEVE WILL REMAIN ELUSIVE.

. ADEQUATE RESOURCING IS PART OF THE ANSWER.

. BUT WE MUST ALSO ENSURE WE GET THE MOST OUT OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE, AND THIS MEANS ADOPTING THE MOST EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO OVERCOME CONSTRAINTS.

AUSTRALIA REMAINS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING QUALITY PROGRAMS IN THE AREA OF POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT. WE WILL ALSO SUPPORT PRACTICAL COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE COUNTRY LEVEL RESPONSES.

WE REAFFIRM THE CAIRO PRINCIPLES AND LOOK TO THIS MEETING TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR PRACTICAL, AFFORDABLE FUTURE ACTIONS THAT WILL BRING THE CAIRO GOALS CLOSER TO REALITY.

THANK YOU MR PRESIDENT