
BANGLADESH

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STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. MR. SALAH UDDIN YUSUF
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
AND
LEADER OF THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION**

AT THE

**TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF ICPD, 30 JUNE – 2 JULY 1999**

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE **UNITED NATIONS**
821 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, **8TH** FLOOR, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017
E-mail: bangladesh@un.int, web site: www.un.int/bangladesh
TEL (212) 867-3434. FAX (212) 972-4038

Mr. President,

It is my special delight to be here in participating in the twenty-first special session of the UN General Assembly for the five-year review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of International Conference on Population and Development. Bangladesh had been intimately involved in all the stages that led to the special session.

I am most pleased that Bangladesh has been elected as the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee to the special session. I would like to make particular reference to the Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, who has been ably guiding one of the most difficult negotiations over the last four months as the Chairman of the **PrepCom** and now the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. President,

Soon after Bangladesh was born, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman** for the first time declared population issue as the number one concern for the newly independent nation. We have since formulated population policies and programmes as a national priority.

The International Conference of Population and Development was a turning point in our approach to the population problem. It has given us new directions as how best to integrate the issue of population with human development. The paradigm shift in Cairo from people's numbers to their needs resulted in reorientation of our approach. The needs of women and men became the primary objectives to seek -- not only the pursuit of demographic targets. In order to **translate the** new paradigm into action, as a very first step, soon after Cairo, we in Bangladesh constituted a broad-based 'National Committee for Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.' We pursued the goals through formulation of a National Plan of Action.

In recent years, under the enlightened leadership and personal commitment of our Prime Minister Sheikh **Hasina**, we have gained considerable progress in implementation of our National Plan of Action.

A number of factors favoured the outcome of our efforts. These include:

- Sustained commitment of the Government;
- Maternal and child health based family **planning** programme;
- Cafeteria approach for providing primary and reproductive health care services;
- Committed grassroots-level workers providing doorstep service;
- Sustained government-NGO partnership, with active support **from** other component of the civil society;
- Proactive role of the mass media;
- Expansion of education with high priority to girls' education;

- **Women's empowerment** and income generation activities, especially through microcredit programmes.

Mr. President,

Although Bangladesh's achievement in the population sector is considered remarkable, there is still much that we could have done. Resource constraints had been and continue to be the main obstacle in attaining our desired goal. This is true for most developing countries.

There had been some increase in the level of international assistance -- though much less than the target -- in the immediate aftermath of Cairo. But in two years, the flow became stagnant, and since 1998, it started to taper off. A notable factor has been the efforts of the developing countries themselves -- they had been more forthcoming in mobilizing domestic resources compared to availability of international assistance.

The donor community has a critically important role in financing population activities. In many countries, particularly in the least developed ones, funding for population activity is donor-driven. Naturally without adequate resources, the implementation of ICPD Programme of Action beyond this review will not be sustained.

Mr. President,

The implementation of ICPD Programme of Action to a large extent is dependent on an active partnership with the international and regional financial institutions and the UN agencies. I would like to highlight the contribution made by the UN Population Fund in the global efforts to implement the Programme of Action. My delegation would like to mention in particular the commitment and leadership demonstrated by the UNFPA Executive Director **Nafis Sadik** in carrying forward the Cairo agenda.

Mr. President,

The major global conferences of the decade of 1990s has given the international community a new understanding of the **socio-economic** development dynamics, a new direction to move on with a new commitment for global partnership. Cairo Conference has been a major milestone of this decade. The special session gives us the opportunity to renew our individual and collective commitments for further follow-up and implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. Let us work together for a better world for all of us.

I thank you, Mr. President.