



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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As WRITTEN

STATEMENT
BY
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STATE MINISTER - MINISTER OF HEALTH
OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
AT THE 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

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great honor to represent the delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia at such an important event as the Twenty First Special Session of the General Assembly on the Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Cambodia has aligned itself with the Statement presented by Germany, on behalf of the European Union.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development was a watershed for and a tribute to the relevance of population issues. In the preamble of the Programme of Action, the Conference is described as the defining moment in the history of international cooperation noting the "growing recognition of global population, development, and environmental interdependence. " In 1994, the Royal Government of Cambodia fully endorsed the Programme of Action. It did so even as many Cambodians, possibly in recalling the immense loss of the recent past, may not have been certain about all aspects of population issues.

The genius of the Programme of Action lies in its emphasis on sovereign and individual action to achieve a higher goal. It recognizes that each nation should decide its own course of action within the boundaries of international standards of corporation and universal solidarity epitomized by the United Nations Charter; and that any such course must aim to make individual human beings the center of concerns for sustainable development. The Programme of Action presents a vision and blueprint for global development, while strongly reconfirming the principle that nations are the engines for progress on a journey that begins in the mind of every man and woman.

Mr. President,
Cambodia has tried, I believed, successfully to do justice to this wisdom. From a careful, modest beginning in 1994, Cambodian has since taken great strides toward defining and implementing its vision. What began as a modest capacity building exercise in delivering birth spacing services in selected parts of the country has expanded into a full nation-wide reproductive health program which is fully integrated a part of the standard Minimum Package of

Activities for primary health care services. In 1999, we established the National AIDS Authority to ensure a more effective multi-sectoral approach to this disease which, I am sad to say, has already assumed epidemic proportions in my country. The 1998 National Census, the first since 1962, took over four years to prepare. The population count was nationally and internationally recognized as a model in execution. A very high response rate and the high quality of completed questionnaires assure policy makers and development planners the use of a highly reliable population database. The efforts of the Government, particularly in the area of gender and women, is represented by a strong Ministry dedicated specifically to promote the status of women. The five-year Plan of the Ministry has as its main goals the empowerment of women to influence national policies and the mobilization of the nation to ensure gender equality and equity. The Government is complemented by strong work of members of the NGO community active in such areas as reproductive health and women's rights, many of which were inspired by the ICPD Programme of Action and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

Mr. President,

Since the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, Cambodia has made significant progress. The Royal Government of Cambodia has exerted all efforts to eradicate poverty and to realize a decent and prosperous living standard for its peoples. The Government attaches great importance to the issues pertaining to the well-being of human beings and compassing all national and international activities with a view to achieving economic growth in the context of sustainable development and social justice. With growing political stability, the Government is able to further strengthen its contribution to the social sector. The contraceptive prevalence rate, although modest by international standards, is increasing rapidly. Increased awareness of HIV/AIDS is beginning to translate into greater condom use among men visiting with commercial sex workers. Appreciation among Cambodian leaders for the relationship between population and development has grown significantly, particularly since the 1998 census.

We recognize, ofcourse, that much remains to be done. Maternal mortality rates are unacceptably high. As I mentioned already, in Cambodia, AIDS is an epidemic. Domestic violence, including trafficking of women and children, needs to be addressed urgently and more effectively. Despite some

important efforts now underway, not enough is done to address the considerable reproductive health needs of young people. School dropout rates of girls are far higher than those of boys. My country's performance on the Gender Development Index leaves much to be desired.

As I stated earlier, Cambodia has made impressive progress since the ICPD, I must stress that this progress can only be safeguarded if we honestly and sincerely face the challenges that still lie before us. The Royal Government of Cambodia did so when it endorsed the ICPD Programme of Action. It accepts its responsibility towards improving the quality of life of all individuals and recognizes that aiming to meet the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action is pivotal to extending such quality to all Cambodians.

In this context, I wish emphatically to call upon the international community to further strengthen its efforts by increasing its commitments to meet the goals of the Programme of Action.

The Royal Government of Cambodia looks forward to the next five years of co-operation until the next global meeting on population and development and wishes all of you success and prosperity along the way.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.