

Постоянное Представительство
Российской Федерации
при
Организации Объединенных
Наций



Permanent Mission
of the Russian Federation

*East, 67 Street
New York, N.Y. 10021*

Unofficial translation
Check against delivery

STATEMENT

by H.E. Mrs. Valentina I. Matvienko,
Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation,
Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation
to the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly
for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the
Programme of Action of the International Conference
on Population and Development

June 30, 1999

Distinguished Mr. President,

The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo gave a powerful impetus to the development and implementation of comprehensive policies in this field by the international community, including Russia.

Five years from Cairo, certain results have been achieved at the global scale in such key areas, as reduction of maternal and infant mortality, improvements in reproductive health and better access to education. In this process, we **recognise** a significant and important role of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) as a central body in the UN activities in this area.

However, it is obvious that for a number of goals, the pace of progress achieved remains unsatisfactory. In our view, to a great extent this is directly linked to other unsolved problems in the world, including social costs of macro-economic reforms, and negative global impact of the last two years' financial crises in Asia, Latin America and Russia. The complexity of the globalisation phenomenon, and insufficient resource mobilisation for population activities jeopardise the achievement of the Cairo goals.

Under these circumstances, it is important to increase the attention to the social components of economic development, and to put the human person, its dignity, rights, economic **and spiritual** potential, and most of all, life and health, in the centre of national and international policies. These crucial important elements should become a part of a “concept of peace in the 21st century” that the President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin proposed to elaborate.

We are convinced that the preservation of peace for development is the indispensable condition of the progress in **the** implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. For several months, the world witnessed a war in one of the relatively prosperous, in economic terms, regions - the Balkans where vital social infrastructure and human potential of a sovereign state were deliberately destroyed. The scale of the destruction there is already measured in tens of thousands of houses, thousands of schools, hundreds of healthcare institutions (hospitals, polyclinics). The health of the people of Yugoslavia, and the state of its environment is under threat, and the development potential of this country has been undermined.

The unprecedented humanitarian crisis will require huge resources and many years of efforts to put an end to the sufferings of the people and to restore peaceful life. Unless these problems are solved in an urgent manner, first of all through the contribution of those who bear the responsibility for the bombardments, all talks about global responsibility in population and development matters will have no sense.

Mr. President,

Russia is fully committed to the spirit and goals of the Cairo Conference. Guided by the Cairo principles, the Government has consistently pursued its policy in the field of population. The authorities have seriously revised the approach to demographic problems.

At the same time, the environment in which the Government works is not simple at all. Russia, just like a number of other countries with economies in transition, has been facing serious demographic problems which evolved in the course of the market reforms in the 90s’.

The mortality level, especially among working age men, remains high, and matched by a persistently low fertility rate results in the continuing reduction of Russia’s population size. The life expectancy has been decreasing. The health of Russian citizens, especially children and youth, has deteriorated, and infectious diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases, have been spreading at a high pace. The problem of forced migration became more acute, especially labour migration, which sometimes acquired illegal character.

In order to overcome these negative trends, the Government of the Russian Federation based on the Concept of the Programme of Action to mitigate the demographic crisis in the Russian Federation elaborated in 1998, has launched concrete short-term and long-term measures.

Our main priorities are to reduce mortality, improve health services, provide acceptable living standards, and ensure social protection.

The Government of Russia has been focused on the protection of reproductive health and promoted comprehensive preventive measures in this area, including the introduction of a country-wide system of universal ultrasonic screening of women’s reproductive system. The result was some stabilisation of infant mortality rate which, however, still remains unacceptably high.

The implementation, since 1994, of Presidential Programmes “Family **Planning**” and “Safe Motherhood” made it possible to reduce the absolute number of abortions by one third, and achieve a 20% reduction in abortion-related maternal mortality. To a large extent, such changes were the result of an active involvement of non-governmental organisations in addressing this problem.

The national policies on family, women’s and children affairs have been carried out in a consistent manner. National plans of actions for children and the advancement of women approved by the President of the Russian Federation are under implementation. A lot is being done to implement the provisions of the Family Code of the Russian Federation relating to ensuring the rights of the child, including in the provision of general education, protection against child abuse, and violence in the family.

The Russian authorities strive to ensure the interests of senior citizens who constitute a growing segment of the Russian society and its most vulnerable group. To this end, the Federal Programme “Senior Generation” has been introduced and is under implementation, and long-term benchmarks for social policy vis-a-vis senior citizens have been established.

Our migration policy faces the challenge of **streamlining** the migration flows, mitigating negative impacts of unregulated migration, creating conditions for the implementation of **recognised** rights of migrants, and ensuring humane treatment of asylum-seekers. An important component of this policy is to promote improvements in the situation and the protection of the rights of our compatriots abroad.

One of the major difficulties in the implementation of the Russian policy in the field of population and development is the lack of public funds for financing the necessary **socio-demographic** programmes. In this context, the problem of new sources of funding and mobilisation of both domestic and external resources has moved to the top of the agenda.

Speaking of these problems, we attach great significance to international co-operation. The need to mobilise external support for major reforms carried out by Russia in the area of population and **development** is more necessary than ever before. We would like to count on increased assistance in these areas both from traditional bilateral partners and multilateral organisations, including the UN system.

We attach great importance to the growing co-operation with the **UNFPA**. It is important to ensure that the co-operation with multilateral organisations be based on broad partnerships with civil society, including non-governmental organisations, private sector, academia, local authorities in the Russian regions. Given the **similarity** of many problems and objectives, we would favour a more active regional approach of UN bodies to such co-operation which could, for example, cover the needs of interested countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Central and Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the “Proposals for key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development” to be adopted by this Special Session of the General Assembly will make a solid contribution to the practical solution of the global population and development problems in all its multifaceted aspects.

Thank you.