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STATEMENT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Statement delivered by

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United Nations General Assembly
Twenty-First Special Session
on the International Conference on
Population and Development (ICPD+5)

July 1, 1999

1. *Adel*
2. *Educa*

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to speak today. We feel it is a privilege to participate in this most important Special Session.

Five years ago the global community gathered in Cairo to forge an action plan that has changed the focus of population work from demographic targets and control to a rights-based approach that puts people first. While recognizing the need to achieve balance between demographic changes, poverty reduction and protection of the environment, the Cairo approach affirms that this balance is more likely to be achieved by addressing the needs of poor and vulnerable groups, by reducing gender inequality, and by increasing the involvement of all segments of civil society in the development process.

The years that have elapsed since International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) have not been easy ones.

- Financial crises have rocked East Asia, Russia and Brazil.
- Civil conflict has forced massive movements of refugees in Europe and Africa.
- Natural disasters have caused devastating losses of life and property in Latin America.
- The HIV/AIDS epidemic has reversed modest gains in life expectancy and poverty reduction in Africa.

In the face of these challenges, we should not lose sight of our long run goals of poverty reduction and human development.

ICPD reminded us that effective investments in education, health and family planning pay high dividends in helping countries to slow their population growth and in improving people's living standards. These investments have enabled couples to have smaller, healthier and more educated families. Women and children now have better chances of surviving pregnancy and childbirth, and of living healthier, more productive lives.

There is no room for complacency, however. The global financial crisis has made it more difficult for countries and donors to mobilize resources to implement the Cairo Program of Action. Many poor women still suffer the risks of poorly timed, unwanted pregnancies, as well as obstetric complications, that jeopardize their own and their children's health and welfare.

Early and unplanned childbearing will also account for most of the projected two billion people who will be added to the global population over the coming three decades. Most of this increase will occur in poor countries. Sustained support of reproductive health programs as well as broader poverty reduction and human development efforts are required to ensure that inequality between and within nations does not worsen.

The documentation for this review of progress on the ICPD Program of Action provides ample evidence of how countries are responding to these challenges. In support of their efforts, the World Bank has extended over \$2 billion in loans and credits since 1994 for direct support of

population and reproductive health activities. Even more has been provided through support for child survival, girls' education, and the empowerment of women, where the links to population and reproductive health are indirect.

The social sectors now account for a fifth of overall Bank lending. The share is over one-third in the case of low-interest credits for the poorest borrowers from IDA, the Bank's concessional lending arm.

Resource mobilization is important, but results depend on how well those resources are used. The Bank is working with its partners to address the underlying constraints that make health and education systems unresponsive to the needs of the poor. Making systems work better is particularly important for such efforts as Safe Motherhood, which requires effective referral of obstetric complications in order to save women's lives.

Many initiatives described in the World Bank's health and education strategy papers, and in the new population and reproductive health strategy, are aimed at improving effectiveness through:

- better division of public and private sector roles in the financing and delivery of services,
- better organization and management of service-delivery systems, and
- greater community participation in the design and monitoring of programs.

Beyond the Bank's lending role, our partners seek support in the dialogue with governments about the multi-sectoral dimensions of population and reproductive health.

Mr. President:

We cannot accept the vast differences in health and welfare between rich and poor countries, and between the rich and poor within countries. The ICPD Program of Action has mapped an effective strategy to link population and reproductive-health issues to poverty reduction, improvements in gender equality, and protection of human rights.

The challenge before all of us is one of effective implementation of that strategy. Working together, we can protect and expand support for high-quality reproductive health services, for empowering women through education and economic opportunities, and for ensuring that countries are capable of dealing effectively with the changing social, demographic and economic realities they face as they move into the new Millennium. The World Bank, with its UN partners, is more committed than ever before to putting people first.