



Malaysia

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Permanent Mission to the United Nations

(Item 45)

STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE TENTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

AT

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

ON

THURSDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2004

(Please check again delivery)

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Distinguished Representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The 10th Anniversary of the ICPD offers us another opportunity to assess our achievements and look for further solutions to whatever constraints we face in the implementation of the ICPD-Programme of Action and ultimately the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). ICPD+5 had shown that the ICPD goals were relevant and that much progress had been made in advancing them. At the same time it was recognized that more concerted action was also needed in a few areas and additional benchmarks were set for four priority issues: education and literacy, reproductive health care, maternal mortality reduction and HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

2. As we commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+10) today, I would like to state that Malaysia reaffirms its full commitment to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We have initiated changes when necessary in our development policies including in programmes and institutional and organizational frameworks. This has been done in order to support the strategy of integrating population issues into all development planning policies and programmes as envisaged in the ICPD-POA. We are fully conscious of the need not to link population policies and programmes to demographic goals and targets, but more to place population concerns at the heart of sustainable development in keeping with ICPD goals.

3. Malaysia's current population programmes have been revised along thematic areas of concern and priorities to the country in line with the ICPD – POA: population, family development and reproductive health in the context of social equitability, poverty alleviation and environmentally sound development. With the ICPD, the integration of the economic, social, demographic and environmental dimensions of development has been further strengthened. Measures have also been taken to promote sustainable consumption and production, protect the environment, sustainably manage the resource base, enhance human, institutional and infrastructure capacity and improve the quality of life of the people.

Mr. President,

4. Please allow me to highlight some of the areas in which Malaysia has made significant gains. Malaysia has succeeded in reducing the incidence of poverty from 17.1 percent in 1990 to less than 5 percent in 2003. Under the currently implemented Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005), the thrust of our poverty eradication programme is to reduce the incidence of poverty to 0.5 percent by the year 2005.

5. Malaysian women have made significant progress in almost all areas of development in the last three decades. The advancement of women in Malaysia is evident in many sectors, including in public and political life. Currently in the Cabinet, there are three women Ministers, three women Deputy Ministers and six women Parliamentary Secretaries. There are 22 women as Members of Parliament. Women make up 46.2 percent of the civil service with a number of them highly placed in decision-making positions. Maternal mortality ratio is currently around 30 per 100,000. Women in Malaysia are expected to live up to 75 years. Comparatively Malaysian men have a life expectancy of 70 years.

6. Primary education is almost universal. The national literacy rate is 91 percent, while the rate among females aged 10 and above is 85 percent. Almost 70 percent of undergraduates are females and this has enabled almost half of the women to gain employment. The participation of females in the labour force has also increased from 41.9 percent in 1991, prior to the ICPD, to 48 percent in 2003.

7. To further demonstrate the Malaysian Government's commitment towards gender equality and empowerment of women, the Ministry of Women and Family Development was established in February 2001 with the objective of mainstreaming women in nation-building, ensuring the full integration and maximum participation of women in national development and strengthening the family system so as to establish a quality generation. On 27 March 2004, the Ministry was given added responsibility over a broad range of social issues and it has since been named the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

8. The Plan of Action for advancement of women launched in 1997 is currently being reviewed. In August 2001, the Federal Constitution was amended to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender. A database on women's health is also being developed by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development to improve the status of women's health. The Government has also amended relevant legislations on crimes against women including laws relating to rape and domestic violence.

9. Malaysia has also undertaken several initiatives to ensure that family planning services are provided under the broader package of reproductive health. In this regard, a Central Coordinating Committee on Reproductive Health has also been formed to look into the policies, strategies and optimal ways of integrating other reproductive health components into the primary health care system and into family planning programmes.

10. The issue of HIV/AIDS is also being seriously addressed in Malaysia. Since the first case of AIDS was reported in Malaysia in 1986, HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes have been established. A nationwide campaign on HIV/AIDS was first launched in 1991 to provide gender sensitive education about sexuality, life skills and behaviour change. Free HIV testing and counseling are available in all

government hospitals and some health clinics. A special community mobilization programme for youth has been in place since in 1996. At the same time, efforts have also continued towards gender-based programmes especially for women and children, through the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV Programme. This has helped improve the chances of HIV positive mothers delivering healthy babies.

Mr. President,

11. Given prevailing demographic trends, it is projected that, by the year 2020, the number of elderly people in Malaysia will constitute about 9.5 per cent of an estimated total population of 33.4 million. Although Malaysia is considered as having a 'young' population, the early sensitization and consciousness-raising efforts of the Government on the issue of ageing reflects its awareness of significant changes taking shape in the demographic process. Over the years the Government has introduced various policies and programmes such as the National Welfare Policy (1990), National Policy for Older Persons (1995) and The Plan of Action for Older Persons (1998) aimed at improving the quality of life of older persons and integrating them into the mainstream of development.

12. The role of civil society and non-governmental organizations as partners in the implementation of population and related programmes has also been recognized and supported in Malaysia. Their involvement, participation and sharing of resources have been pivotal to the success of the Government's population related programmes. Since ICPD, annual dialogues between Government and the NGOs have been conducted to facilitate greater smart partnership. Recognizing their role, the Government has also provided grants to these NGOs to enable them to play a more effective role in the activities and programmes in the country. For example, the Government works closely with the Malaysian AIDS Council, a leading NGO to address the HIV-AIDS problem.

13. The ICPD has demonstrated to the world that if countries aspire to provide adequate opportunity for a better life to their citizens, they would need to incorporate the appropriate population policies into their development strategy. Malaysia is fully aware of this and remains committed to the ICPD objectives at the national, regional and international levels. However, we are conscious that many of the developing countries are still unable to meet these basic goals for lack of financial and other resources. In this regard, it is important that adequate financial and technical resources be provided to them through various means. Promises made in the various international summits and conferences must be fulfilled by both developed and developing countries. On its part, Malaysia has extended its modest contribution within its means, towards assisting other developing countries in the context of South-South cooperation, including under the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP).

Thank you.