

**Statement to the Thirty-Eighth Session of the
Commission on Population and Development**

By
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates,

During this week, the Commission will discuss two very important topics. The overarching one is the contribution that the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development can make to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The special theme focuses on HIV/AIDS, poverty and development.

As you know, the series of United Nations conferences and summits held during the 1990s set out an ambitious development agenda that provided the foundation for the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in the year 2000. Next September, a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly will conduct the first five-year review of progress made in the fulfilment of all the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is a key player in this process, since it provides substantive secretariat support to all the functional commissions in charge of assessing and reviewing the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the social and economic fields. The Department is also a major partner in monitoring progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in disseminating information regarding the indicators of that progress.

The review of progress made in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action that the Commission conducted last year together with its deliberations this year outnnum Dli0.015.2494

resources in the health and education sectors, impeding human development in countries that need it the most.

In 1994, the ICPD Programme of Action was one of the first documents adopted by the international community that recognized HIV/AIDS as a global threat to health and development. Five years later, in 1999, as the epidemic continued to worsen, the key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action included for the first time a quantitative goal for the reduction of the spread of HIV. It called for a 25 per cent reduction of new infections among young people by 2010. But action to attain that goal was slow in coming and many countries still face a growing epidemic. Clearly, the Millennium Development Goal of halting or reversing the spread of HIV is crucial for the development prospects of many countries. The international community's success or failure in meeting this goal will profoundly affect the ability of many countries to reach other development objectives. In this respect, full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action has much to contribute to help reduce the spread of the disease, particularly by ensuring that people get the information and means to protect themselves against contagion.

Today, and with good reason, concern over HIV/AIDS ranks high in the policy agenda of the majority of countries in the world. In response to the epidemic, most Governments have implemented programmes focusing on HIV prevention. These programmes include a variety of strategies, ranging from information, education and communication campaigns to voluntary counselling and testing. Programmes often target high-risk groups or those most vulnerable to the risk of infection, including women and young people. Experience indicates that programmes are most effective when tailored to the specific risk factors and situations prevalent in each country. For instance, in Brazil, Thailand and Uganda, very different but highly effective responses to the epidemic have been implemented. However, fighting the spread of HIV demands constant vigilance and sustained effort. Effective prevention programmes to at reduce mother-to-child transmission of the disease, for instance, are still far from being universal. In addition, more has to be done to expand access to antiretroviral treatment for those already affected by the disease.

Given these major challenges, it is all the more important that in June of this year a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS is scheduled to take place to review the progress achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The deliberations of this Commission will be an important input to that meeting.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, you will consider over the next few days some of the most critical issues stalling development and perpetuating poverty in the world. I wish you every success in finding common ground to move ahead in effectively addressing these challenges. Mr. Chairman, I am confident that under your expert guidance and with the help of your Bureau, the meetings of this session of the Commission will proceed smoothly to a successful end.