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PRESS RELEASE

USUN PRESS RELEASE # 190 (04)
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October 14, 2004

Statement by Ambassador Sichan Siv, U.S. Representative to the Economic and Social Council, on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, in the General Assembly, October 14, 2004

The United States is pleased to join with others on this 10th anniversary of ICPD, because of our firm commitment to advancing the well-being of women and their families, and to upholding the positive values and ideals embraced in the ICPD Program of Action.

While ICPD is not a perfect document, it has historic importance and reflects the aspirations of the international community. It provides a broader concept of population policy, one that is focused on humanity and the human condition, that respects cultural, religious, and social values, and that firmly condemns government control and coercion.

As we do in all of our work in the United Nations, the United States approaches ICPD in the context of the UN charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These documents commit the world community to protecting the dignity and worth of each human person, a concept at the heart of ICPD.

In the years since ICPD, we have seen that there is no "one size fits all" approach to population. In many countries, today's population trends are positive: longer lifespans, healthier families, and greater prosperity.

In others, however, there is a sadder story to tell. Maternal mortality remains a devastating sorrow, undiminished since Cairo. More than 1.1 billion people exist in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1 a day. Increasing urbanization in the developing world brings the challenge of providing for some of the world's poorest peoples.

Worst of all, the number of individuals living with HIV has grown from approximately 14 million in 1994 to over 38 million today. The international community is only now beginning to make headway against the ferocity of this disease.

Yet, let there be no confusion. The United States is committing substantial resources to meeting these challenges. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

alone spends more than \$1.4 billion on international health assistance, *exclusive of* HIV/AIDS programming. Additionally, we are rapidly escalating our support for HIV prevention, care and treatment activities. These are carried out through both the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, with planned expenditures through 2008 of fifteen billion dollars.

The promotion of behavior change – encouraging abstinence and fidelity – is integral to our fight against HIV/AIDS. Working with parents, we must encourage our youth to make safe and healthy choices. Equally important, we recognize that empowering and protecting women is a critical component of efforts to stop the spread of this disease. The status of women – and the influence of cultural norms, property rights, and economic opportunity on their lives – are all critical factors in reducing their risk of HIV infection.

The United States is the largest single donor of maternal health assistance, including family planning and reproductive health programs. For these, USAID programming has exceeded \$475 million annually over the last 4 years – a \$50 million increase in funding from the year 2000. In recent years, we have increased our maternal and reproductive health assistance to countries in Africa and the Near East.

As we entered this ten-year review process, there was a need for greater clarity about what ICPD does – and doesn't – say on sensitive issues like reproductive health services.

The regional review process has been helpful because it has served to allay one of our key concerns, which was that some might be misusing ICPD to promote abortion. However, what we have heard over and over in regional reviews is that nations do not believe ICPD promotes, endorses, or supports abortion. The United States concurs that nothing in ICPD should be understood to promote, endorse, or support abortion, and with the understanding that states will not misuse ICPD in that way, we are pleased to continue to offer our strong support for ICPD and its Program of Action.

The United States is advancing the goals of ICPD on many fronts.

Through programs that support both the education and political participation of women around the world -- and that help men appreciate the importance of women's participation -- we are contributing to greater gender equity globally.

We support basic education for girls as well as boys in order to reduce poverty, improve health and social well-being, and sustain economic growth.

We also advance the position of women in the developing world by promoting entrepreneurship and prosperity with microenterprise programs. Our Millennium Challenge Account offers new hope for some of the world's poorest countries. We recognize that the participation of women is vital to the success of a country's long-term development strategy.

We encourage increasing women's political participation and their role in decision-making processes. We provide support for leadership and advocacy training, educational exchange programs, and civil society and democracy skill workshops. We have actively supported the great strides made by women in places like Afghanistan and Iraq in securing their rights under the law. This includes the right to vote, as successfully exercised by the women of Afghanistan last Saturday.

The promotion of gender equality will always be a high priority for the United States. Equally high priorities for the U.S. are respect for motherhood, the rights and responsibilities of parents, and the family as the basic and fundamental unit of societies everywhere.

We also highlight one of ICPD's most significant accomplishments: the crafting of a global consensus on migration that continues to this day. Migration is a global phenomenon. All countries are, to some extent, countries of origin, transit, and destination. America is supporting regional migration dialogues that promote orderly, legal and humane migration policies. These policies should also uphold international protection for refugees, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking. We believe these regional approaches are most likely to yield concrete results for all countries.

ICPD was the first major UN document to focus attention on the issue of trafficking in persons. In this area the global community has indeed made substantial progress. President Bush has taken strong action to combat trafficking at home and abroad, urging action through the UN and signing legislation domestically. Since 2001, the United States has provided more than 295 million dollars to support anti-trafficking programs in more than 120 countries.

In sum, there is much to be proud of in what together we have accomplished in the past ten years. There is much yet to be done. The United States looks forward to continuing our positive partnership in advancing our shared goal of a better life for all.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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