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STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE AT THE 64th SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA 48: COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CAIRO 1994)

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Here below the statement delivered by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See, on 13 October 2009 at the 64th Session of the Un General Assembly on Agenda 48: Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields - Commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Mr. President,

As we call to mind the 15th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), we recognize the many challenges facing the international community to achieve the goal of greater sustained economic and social development.

When States came together in Cairo in 1994, many of them were under the impression that a population explosion was going to occur and hamper the ability to achieve adequate global economic development. Now fifteen years later, we see that this perception was unfounded. In many developed countries, population demographics have declined to the point where some national legislators are now encouraging an increase in birth rates to assure continued economic growth. Similarly, in many parts of the developing world, development has been occurring at previously unachieved rates and the greatest threat to development results not from a population explosion but from irresponsible world and local economic management. For nearly a century, attempts have been made to link global population with the food, energy, natural resources and environmental crises. Yet, on the contrary, it has been consistently demonstrated by human ingenuity and the ability of people to work together that human persons are the world's greatest resource.

The ICPD Report reiterated the need for States to promote and strengthen the family as a vital element of

producing greater social and economic development. The ever increasing presence of women in the job market has raised new challenges for the family and women both in the work sector and at home. Sexual and economic exploitation, trafficking of women and girls and discriminatory practices in the job market have challenged governments to promote and apply policies to end these injustices and support the family in its proper responsibilities.

Demographic policies must also take into account the needs of migrants as part of an overall responsibility to place the human person at the center of all development policies. Too often migration is seen by governments and individuals as an unwitting consequence of globalization and negative stereotypes of migrants are used to promote policies which have a dehumanizing effect and create unconscionable divisions within families. As noted in the most recent "Human Development Report", migration exists in all regions of the world with migrants often providing necessary skills and talents to destination countries while at the same time ensuring valuable support to their countries of origin. While other aspects of the ICPD Program of Action have received greater attention in the past, to truly achieve all the constructive proposals of the ICPD Report, greater efforts must be made to enact human centered policies which recognize the shared benefits of migration. More must be done to make the ICPD's appeal for achieving development in all countries a means for addressing the reasons behind migration and to enact policies which protect migrants from illegal trafficking.

The ICPD's call for universal access to quality education continues to serve as the most effective means for promoting sustainable economic, social and political development. It also goes without saying that access to education for women and girls at all levels is at the heart of empowering women within society and promoting equality between men and women.

Too often in addressing the role of the ICPD on maternal health, attempts are made to promote a notion of sexual and reproductive health which is detrimental to unborn human life and the integral needs of women and men within society. Efforts to address maternal mortality, obstetric fistula, child mortality, prenatal and antenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases and other health matters are hampered by sanitary policies which fail to take into account the right to life of the unborn child and promote birth control as a development policy and disguised health service. Suggesting that reproductive health includes a right to abortion explicitly violates the language of the ICPD, defies moral and legal standards within local communities and divides efforts to address the real needs of mothers and children.

Renewing our effort to respond to the integral health and social needs of the community entails taking into account the social, cultural and spiritual needs of all and adhering to the international standard set in the ICPD which calls for national laws to be fully respected.

For its part, the Catholic Church remains committed to providing access to health care for everyone. Through its over 5,000 hospitals, 18,000 health clinics, and 15,000 homes for the elderly and disabled, as well as other health care programs throughout the world, Catholic based institutions are committed to providing the right to quality and effective and morally responsible health care for all.

Ultimately, the ICPD Final Report like many development instruments must seek to assure the development especially of the most vulnerable within society. In this regard, providing for the overall physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of children is paramount to ensure that future generations may know abject poverty and child mortality as a historical remnant rather than a daily reality.

Thank you Mr. President.

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