

**International Workshop for Senior Officials on
Population and Climate Change
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**Statement by
Harry S. Jooseery, Executive Director
Partners in Population and Development (PPD)**

Mr. Lu Liusheng, Deputy Party Secretary and Mayor of Taicang City

Mr. Chang Peng, Deputy Division Chief, Division of General Management, Academy for International Business Officials (AIBO), Ministry of Commerce of China (MOFCOM)

Mr. Hu Hongtao, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Cooperation, National Population and Family Planning Commission of China (NPFPC)

Dr. Bernard Coquelin, Country Representative, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), China

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure addressing you this morning at the opening of this important international workshop on Population and Climate Change. I would like in the first instance to thank His Excellency, Mr. Lu Liusheng, Deputy Party Secretary and Mayor of Taicang City for sparing his precious time to be with us this morning, together with Mr. Hu Hongtao, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Cooperation, National Population and Family Planning Commission of China (NPFPC). This international workshop is being organized in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding that the Government of China and Partners in Population and Development signed a few years ago with the objective to strengthen capacity building in developing countries. 100 professionals are expected to be trained yearly on issues related to RH, Population, Environment and Development. It is indeed an honor to be associated with your Excellency in the organization of this workshop and I wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Government of the Peoples Republic of China for all the support and assistance provided to us. Your Excellency, thank you once again.

I am also pleased to welcome my colleague and good friend Dr. Bernard Coquelin, Resident Representative of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in China to this workshop and thank him wholeheartedly for his support to us.

Partners in Population and Development (PPD) and UNFPA have been long standing privileged partners and we have collaborated for years in addressing Sexual and Reproductive Health program in developing countries and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks and gratitude to Dr. Thoraya Obaid, the Executive Director of UNFPA and I wish to request Dr. Bernard Coquelin to convey our best wishes to her too. I thank all the participants from different developing countries for their presence and wish you all fruitful discussions during your stay with us.

Ladies and Gentleman,

PPD is an intergovernmental organization of 25 developing countries dedicated to the promotion and strengthening of South-South Cooperation in population and development. Through advocacy, policy dialogues, exchange of information, capacity building, research, training and technical assistance, it assists developing countries in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). After the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, and, particularly after the inclusion of universal reproductive health care under MDG-5 in 2005, PPD has given special attention, in its programme of activities, to issues relating to maternal mortality, reproductive health and environment for the alleviation of poverty. We are covering 57% of the world population and we are spread over in Asia, Africa and Latin America. While the Secretariat is in Bangladesh, we have an office in New York, a Program Office in China and a Regional Office in Uganda. We wish to be able to synergize all efforts in developing countries to improve quality of life and welfare in the context of achieving ICPD Goals and the MDGs.

The linkage between Population and climate change is undeniable and yet not well understood. The influence of mankind on the Earth in recent centuries has become so significant as to constitute a new geological era where *Population* is the main driver. Every hour, more than 10,000 people join the global population and as a result every hour, four million tons of carbon dioxide are emitted; 1500 hectares of forests are cut and three species go extinct.

In recent years the earth's climate has been battered by extremes. Eleven of the twelve hottest years worldwide occurred between 1995 and 2006. The statistics coming from many recent climate-related natural disasters are startling. An exceptional heat wave engulfed Europe in August 2003, and led in a few days to the death of 20,000 people. This was the most unprecedented health disaster since 1873. Extreme weather-events will also be a major issue for Asian countries. There is already evidence of an increase in frequency or intensity in Asia of heat waves, tropical cyclones, prolonged dry spells, intense rainfall, tornadoes, snow avalanches, thunderstorms and severe dust storms. The human costs of these hazards are immense. In 2006, southern and eastern China experienced major storms and flooding, while the rest of the country suffered intense heat waves and drought, killing more than 2700 people overall and causing US\$ 20 billion in damages. Africa too, is a continent already under pressure from climate stresses and is much more vulnerable to further climate change. One third of Africans already live in drought-prone areas and 220 million experience drought every year.

Overall, then, not a single developing country can afford to ignore the threat posed by climate change-driven natural disasters. This means that all such nations—in fact, every single person on the planet—should be deeply concerned by the unprecedented rate of loss of biodiversity.

All these change are anthropogenic, that is human induced. They are all caused by mankind. It is important that we understand that a larger population will emit

more greenhouse gases that will result in greater global warming. It is unfortunate that for the past decade, family planning has had low priority in many parts of the world and as a result global population continues to increase with 95% impact in developing countries. The consequences of inaction on population issue are dire. If today's birth rate remains unchanged, world population will grow from 6.7 billion today to 11.9 billion in 2050, with disastrous consequences on the environment.

The latest report of the British All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health highlights the reemergence of the population growth factor as a serious threat to health, economic development and environment especially in the world's poorest countries and urged for the repositioning of Family planning on the development agenda. If women worldwide were able to fully exercise their reproductive wishes, 1-2 billion tons of carbon emissions could be averted each year. We would like to congratulate the initiative of China in intensifying its Family Planning program that has averted 400 million births since the introduction of one child policy. On average, each citizen of China emits 4.5 tons of Carbon Dioxide per annum. That would have been an additional 1.5 billion tones of CO₂ emitted per annum, if those births had not been averted. In this context, it is disappointing to note that support for family planning worldwide has declined from 55 per cent of international population assistance in 1995 to less than 5 per cent in 2008.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The twenty first centuries will be the century of a new world order with challenges from new economic powerhouses. There will indeed be the challenge of rebalancing world politics with the emergence of Brazil, China and India. There will also be the challenge of sustainable development that is the challenge of protecting the environment, stabilizing the world's population, narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and alleviating extreme poverty so that the future is not compromised.

None of these challenges can be addressed in isolation as they are all ultimately connected by cause and effect. We have produced a world population dangerously close to the limit of earth's available resources and this is hampering growth and progress in many parts of the world. We have no choice but to adapt to the changes we are facing now and to anticipate those we can expect in the future. Learning to adapt and become more resilient to ongoing changes in the climate is both an immediate and a long term task. Successful adaptation requires an analysis of population dynamics. This will help to clarify who the most vulnerable group are and why and what kind of interventions can most effectively reach them.

Ladies and gentleman,

Before concluding, there are two points that I would like to highlight – first one is the responsibility debate. “Malthusian” theory about the relationship between population growth and the environment is an oversimplification and has largely shown not to be true. Instead, there are factors such as politics and economics (i.e. how we use our resources and for what purpose) that has determined environmental degradation or sustainability. For example, when world leaders gathered in Kyoto and in Copenhagen for the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change, many of the discussions revolved around the relative responsibilities of countries for limiting the growth of greenhouse-gas emissions and for funding efforts to shift to low-carbon energy and other technologies. But climate change is more than an issue of carbon emissions; it is also an issue of population dynamics, poverty and gender equity. Climate change is about people. People cause climate change. People are affected by it. People need to adapt to it. And only people have the power to stop it.

We need policies that are just and equitable and put people at the centre. And this requires taking into account demographic trends and dynamics that include the rates of population growth, fertility and mortality, and the age and spatial distribution of the population, including migration and urbanization. And basic to all this, is the right of individuals to make choices about their lives and their right to reproductive health. Our aim should be to ensure that the public initiative focuses on *all* of those factors, so that the ICPD remains at the heart of population policies. The Cairo Program of Action was a ground breaking document in creating a rights-based approach to family planning, population and sustainable development. ICPD, bolstered by MDG 5(b) has given the signal that unless we address Reproductive Health and Population no development is sustainable. We all need to synergize our efforts to address the issue of Population growth and its impact on the environment so as not to question the very existence of human species on planet earth.

The second point I would like to highlight is the approach most fitting to address the problem. The three proposed solutions to address global warming are Mitigation, Adaptation and Research Development. As global warming impacts on all of us, it is imperative that we all concert to address the problem. It is true that industrialized countries with only 20% of world's population are responsible for 80% of the accumulated carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It is also true that industrialized countries need to provide more assistance to poor countries that are ultimately more vulnerable to the effect of carbon emissions. The North need to assist the South to mitigate the effect of green house gas emissions, adapt to it and for transfer technologies. The South need also to understand the fragile interconnected system that makes the oneness of the world and likewise contribute to mitigate the harm. We hence need a comprehensive set of solutions through South North South Cooperation on the understanding that we share common responsibility and fate across the globe.

While the 1997 Kyoto protocol was adopted by all except United States, the Copenhagen Accord of December 2009 was never adopted and not approved by many nations. Time is more than opportune to promote triangular cooperation between and among the rich and poor countries. With the existing political will and commitment of our leaders coupled with a challenge as immense as climate change and need for urgent strategic interventions, we are permitted to dream that one day our children will run across the wilderness as our forefathers did.

Thank you for your kind attention.