

**Statement by Honorable Song Shem Keasipai, Minister, Minister of
Health and Population, Republic of Vanuatu-**

Mr. / Madame President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me, Mr./Madame President, to firstly, confer my Governments appreciation to UNFPA for inviting Vanuatu delegation to this meeting, and secondly to the Government and people of Netherlands, for hosting this important meeting.

It now gives me a great pleasure to make a short statement. The Pacific response to ICPD POA documented in November last year is an excellent' report. At least I can mention that for Vanuatu. It highlights the existing and emerging problems Vanuatu now experiences, and the type of programs and activities we have in place.

The Vanuatu Government recognizes its high population growth and took the initiative to organize a National Population Seminar in November 1997. A draft population policy now documented will soon be submitted to the cabinet for endorsement. In keeping with the goals of ICPD POA, the Ministry of Health and Population has undertaken a series of activities to increase access to quality reproductive health care services and information. In this connection, the National Family Planning Policy is being revised to reflect a Comprehensive Reproductive Health including Family Planning and Sexual Health guideline. Issues such as gender, education for girls, sexual health, adolescent reproductive health and the environment have yet to be developed in order for Vanuatu to be able to address the overall population issues.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my Government's appreciation for the support given by the multi-lateral and bi-lateral donor agencies, regional organizations and NGOs in assisting my country to address population issues and activities. The step the Vanuatu Government has and will continue to take is a commitment, which it has made when it signed the endorsement of ICPD in Cairo.

The road leading to improving the basic lives of people requires funds, knowledge, cooperation and individual commitment. Any improvements made in this direction will require all of us to stand together and work together. If we do that, there can be nothing that can stop us. We owe it to our countries and our people.

Mr. /Madame President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you very much for your attention.