

As written

**Statement by the Head of Vietnam Delegation,
Minister for Population, Dr. Tran Thi Trung Chien
At the Hague Forum
The Netherlands, 8-12 February 1999**

Your Excellency President of the Forum,
Distinguished guests and participants,
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Vietnam Government, I would like to thank UNFPA for organizing and the Royal Dutch Government for hosting this global forum on population and development. I would like also to extend my heartfelt congratulation to Mr. Nicholas Biegman for being elected as President of this important global forum and to express our confidence that with your leadership the Forum will be successful.

This is the right time for this Forum. We need to review what has been done after Cairo and to find ways to accelerate implementation of the Cairo Program. In Vietnam, the National Post-ICPD Conference was held in March 1998 to mark achievements, identify constraints and develop Action plans for the future. Vietnam participated in the ESCAP regional meeting and is participating in all events of this Forum.

The Vietnam population is about 78 million now and is projected to be around 81 million in 2000. Vietnam will be able to reach replacement fertility level by the year 2005.

In reference to the development strategy, the Government of Vietnam emphasizes that:

The basic concept of the strategy is to place human beings at the center of development and to promote the potential of individuals and communities as well as of the whole nation. The ultimate aim is a wholesome, well-balanced and sustainable development. This is a development strategy for the people and by the people.

The Government of Vietnam is fully conscious of the important role of both men and women in the socio-economic development of the country and is committed to promote gender equality, equity and empowerment of women.

A National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women is being implemented. In the current National Assembly (for the period 1997-2001), women have more than 26% of the total number of parliament seats. Women now constitute 70% of the labor force in the education sector, 60 % - in the health sector. The Law of Marriage and Family is under consideration for amendments to strengthen the participation and obligation of male in child rearing.

A number of issues have been identified as most urgent in reproductive health in Vietnam, such as: meeting unmet needs for family planning, drastic reduction of high rate of abortion and menstrual regulation, improvement of maternal and child health care, the health of aging people, adolescent reproductive health, including teenage pregnancy and abortion, RTI and HIV/AIDS.

Objectives to improve maternal and child health have been developed for the year 2000 and the year 2020.

In family planning, efforts are being made to ensure the informed choice of clients through provision of more comprehensive information, strengthening counseling and provision of a more diversified, modern and safe contraceptive.

In the past, the National Family Planning Program focused only on married couples. The National Workshops on Adolescent Reproductive Health in 1997 made recommendations on strengthening reproductive health education for adolescents, improving legislation to care for and to protect reproductive health of adolescents.

The National Plan of Action on AIDS prevention and care for HIV/AIDS patients has been endorsed in March 1997.

With the strong commitment of the Government of Vietnam, the resources for population and family planning programs have been increased substantially. The total expenditures from the Central Government Budget for the National Population and Family Planning Program have been increased 7 times in recent years, reaching the level of about 36 million US dollars in 1996. Local governments and communities also provide substantial resources for the program.

UNFPA remains the biggest donor for population program in Vietnam, focusing on reproductive health, including family planning; advocacy; and population and development strategies.

In recent years, many countries in the world, other international organizations, including international financial organizations, have been giving technical and financial assistance. The Government of Vietnam and Vietnamese people is grateful for this precious assistance. The financial crisis in Asia in fact has negative effects to our development program. The GDP growth rate in 1998 decreased substantially, the flow of FDI has been reduced drastically. Despite these difficulties, the Government is investing for meeting basic social needs, including reproductive health. But it is not enough for meeting unmet needs in reproductive health and family planning. According to estimates made by a Joint Government/UNFPA team, the country needs additional 150 millions USD only for contraceptives, including

condoms for HIV/AIDS program, up to the year 2007. That is why we call for further assistance from donors to our population program in order to meet all ICPD goals. Please, help us to achieve them.

The ICPD gave new impulses to the population and development program in Vietnam. The National Program is being shifted from targets to promoting rights and choices, from solely family planning to population, reproductive health and development with focus on satisfaction of unmet needs. With the assistance of UNFPA, a National Action Plan on Population and Development is being developed. The Government of Vietnam is strongly committed to successful implementation of ICPD Program of Action.

We hope that this Global Forum will bring new ideas, mobilize the much needed resources, and give new impulses for fostering the implementation of ICPD Program of Action in all member countries.

Thank you for your attention.