Statement

by

Ambassador Masood Khan
Permanent Representative of Pakistan

at UNFPA Segment of the
2014 First Regular Session of the Executive Board
of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS

(New York, 28 January 2014)
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Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations,
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Mr. President,

We thank the Executive Director for sharing with us his priorities for 2014 and highlighting the work done during last year.

We take note of the efforts made to implement the new Strategic Plan. We look forward to the realization of the objectives of the Bull’s Eye” and assure the Executive Director of our full cooperation and support.

Mr. President,

Despite considerable progress, significant, cross-cutting development challenges related to population have yet to be surmounted. Providing quality education and health service and creating employment opportunities must go hand in hand with dismantling varying discriminatory attitudes and ensuring protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We appreciate the UNFPA’s work on the review of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Executive Director's briefing to the Board earlier this month. We look forward to the ICPD review report, which should also be provided to the entire UN membership as early as possible.

The review report should remain close to the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action, and sensitive to different social, cultural and religious perspectives. These perspectives are meant to respect the choices of women in accordance with their beliefs. We should not sanction their invocation as political tools to deny women and girls their basic rights.

This year is an important year as we all work in different but related settings to accelerate achievement of MDGs by the 2015 deadline and prepare a comprehensive, forward looking post-2015 Development Agenda.
This year presents a good opportunity to create an *interface* between the ICPD beyond 2014 and post-2015 development agenda.

We agree with the Executive Director that despite progress on maternal mortality, the goals of reducing maternal deaths and achieving universal access to reproductive health will not be met by 2015. It is therefore incumbent on Board members to respond to the Executive Director's call to intensify their efforts to get the spirit of the ICPD agenda reflected prominently in the post-2015 Development Agenda.

Regionalization is an on-going process. It should not be at the cost of program delivery at country level. This requires a clear understanding between headquarters and Regional offices of their roles, responsibilities and expectations.

**Mr. President,**

With a population of more than 180 million, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. An estimated 110 million Pakistanis (or 60%) are in the working age group. Sixty three million (or 34%) are below the age of 14. Pakistan, therefore, attaches highest importance to programme interventions related to population and development.

Pakistan faces significant challenges impacting the Government's ability to provide education, health services and jobs, especially to youth and women. As a country with young population, we want to translate this potential into accelerated economic growth and development for the entire nation.

We are planning to tap into the youth bulge and turn it into a dividend through enhanced allocation of critical resources to health, education and skill development.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has announced six new schemes for the youth of the country in order to enhance employment opportunities for them. Despite our fiscal constraints, the Government has decided to increase spending on education from 2% to 4% of the GDP and on health from 1% to 2%.

This too is modest, but it is a beginning.
Mr. President,

Pakistan considers that high economic growth is an essential requirement to enable our youth to become the country’s most valuable productive asset. We have launched an ambitious economic revitalization and restructuring programme to adjust and align the fundamental drivers of economic growth. The 60% economically active population is being empowered to transform Pakistan’s socio-economic landscape.

In the last two decades, we have made progress in reducing child, infant and maternal mortality. The lady health workers coverage has reached 83%. An active Population Welfare Programme comprising Family Welfare Centres, Reproductive Health Services Centres and the flagship Mobile Service Units is producing good results on the ground.

Pakistan’s vibrant civil society has played its important role in advocacy and programme planning related to population welfare.

Pakistan has been for the past many years a leading financial contributor to UNFPA’s regular resources. It is only fair that all financial contributors are given equal level of information and access to the organization’s functioning, as well as adequate representation in the organization.

Mr. President,

Pakistan’s partnership with the UNFPA dates back to 1971. Pakistan values its partnership with the UNFPA, dating back to 1971, and supports its mission statement of delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person’s potential is fulfilled.

I thank You.