



Ulla Tørnæs' tale ved konferencen "Challenges for the Danish development assistance in the light of ICPD"

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to start by echoing Ambassador Moesby's warm welcome. It is indeed a great pleasure to welcome you to Copenhagen and to this conference. I hope that this will be a very dynamic and productive conference which will further the ICPD-goal of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

2004 marked the 10th anniversary of the UN Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action. Renewed commitment was expressed at the Commission on Population and Development in March, at the NGO-meeting "Count Down 2015" in London in September, at the UN General Assembly in October and finally by the European Union in December.

Both UNFPA and the 2015 Count Down initiative produced excellent status reports on global, regional and national progress. They also identified problems, challenges and pointed to the need for intensified action over the next 10 years.

In particular the need to reform laws, policies and institutions to promote

gender equality and equity; to integrate reproductive health and family planning into national strategies; to link HIV/AIDS interventions to reproductive health care; to ensure reproductive health and rights of the world's 1.3 billion adolescents, was underscored.

2004 also allowed us to take stock of the Danish contribution to the implementation of ICPD-Programme of Action. In order to stem the opposition to the Programme we join forces with central multilateral organisations as well as other likeminded countries.

At country level, we have given special attention to young people, as they are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. Other important elements have been to contribute to the coordination of population initiatives at country level and promotion of reproductive health in relevant sector programmes.

This year, the Danish Government will launch a new strategy for Danish multilateral effort in the field of population and health. Special focus will be on women and HIV/AIDS.

In addition, we decided – together with the Danish Family Planning Association - to organise this conference on status, challenges and recommendations for the strengthening of the ICPD Goals. The idea is to feed the results from this conference into the new strategy.

To foster a dynamic dialogue today, we invited three outspoken advocates of the ICPD agenda with considerable knowledge, experience and a strong personal involvement in the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and

rights.

We are very pleased to have Dr. Steven Sinding, Director General for the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Dr. Fred Sai, Presidential Advisor on Population and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS from Ghana; and Elizabeth Lule, World Bank Adviser for Population and Reproductive Health. I am sure you will prepare us well for the workshop discussions this afternoon.

The afternoon session will discuss core recommendations for the further development of policy and technical tools. We have chosen the following four themes for the workshops: 1: HIV/AIDS; 2: Reproductive rights and gender equality; 3: Maternal mortality, abortion and contraception; and 4: Youth. We believe these four themes to be crucial for the further implementation of ICPD Programme of Action.

Gender equality and the promotion of human rights are central in Danish development policy. All too often, women are denied basic rights – including their right to education, to a life without violence, their sexual and reproductive rights – their right of making decisions about their own body, as well as their right to vote, and to participate in the political decision making.

Societies at large suffer when women are not given equal rights. It has been demonstrated at countless occasions. Only by giving women equal rights can development be achieved. The Danish Government, therefore, justly believes that upholding women and girls' rights and empowering women are amongst the most effective development tools.

Regrettably, consensus to further advance the agenda of gender equality and

to further strengthen the links between gender equality and sexual reproductive health and rights could not be reached when UN member states gathered for the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality are crucial in the fight against HIV/AIDS. This will be reflected in our new HIV/AIDS strategy to be launched next month.

Growing international pressure has weakened political and financial support for sexual and reproductive information, education and services provided for young people. In some instances, progress achieved has been reversed. Only by em-powering people to claim these rights will they emerge out of poverty.

Underscoring these priorities is the rights based approach. Control of one's own body and fertility is a basic human right. Reproductive and sexual rights are defined in the ICPD Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action. They stem from rights recognised in international human rights treaties, declarations and other instruments. Upholding peoples' rights to sexual and reproductive health is essential to good health and human development. And it will be central to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals constitute our common framework for poverty reduction and the driving force for international development. The ICPD Programme of Action, however, did not find its way into the Millennium Declaration nor is it fully reflected in the Millennium Development Goals. This was not a coincidence - nor was it done

by neglect. __Denmark – together with many other partners - regrets that the ICPD goal of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in 2015 was not squarely addressed in the Millennium Declaration and in the Millennium Development Goals.

In September this year, the UN General Assembly high-level plenary will undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals and the global partnerships required for their achievement.

We will work together with the likeminded partners and others to restore the centrality of population and development to poverty eradication. Our aim is to mainstream the critical linkage of sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender issues in the global consensus on how to reach the MDGs in the outcome document.

To this end, we support the proposal of the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Child Health and Maternal Health to establish a specific target under MDG5 on reproductive health services.

It is simply a question of sufficient political will. Equally important will be to ensure that the decision is followed by action and funds in coming years.

Population issues and sexual and reproductive health and rights will remain high on Danish development agenda. Denmark remains firmly committed to realising international targets on sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality. This commitment has strong support across all political parties

represented in the Danish Parliament. This reflects our firm commitment to the ICPD programme of Action and to the Beijing Platform for Action and to the principles and rights they stand for.

To this end, I have taken great comfort in a statement by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2002 in Bangkok when he said:

“The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that means stronger efforts to promote women’s rights, and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning.”

I believe that this statement gives us hope for strong future commitment to the achievement of the ICPD goal of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in 2015.

Thank you.

Tags

Politisk tale, Venstre

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