

STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF NIUE DELEGATION,

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MINISTER OF HEALTH

6th ASIA AND PACIFIC POPULATION CONFERENCE

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Your Excellency Mr President, and Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of Thailand for hosting this event and to the organisers of this meeting, the Joint Secretariat of the ESCAP and UNFPA. It is an honor and privilege for me to be making a statement and representing my country, Niue, at this 6th Asia and Pacific Population Conference.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Niue Government is committed to the ICPD Goals and reaffirmed our commitment through our endorsement of the Moana Declaration.

While Niue may be the least populous country represented in this room, our issues around population and development are nevertheless important to us.

Niue is a self governing state under a constitution in free association with New Zealand. The people of Niue are Polynesians. Today, almost 18,000 Niueans live in New Zealand and 1,400 live on Niue, known as the “Rock of Polynesia”. Thus the major concern regarding population and development for Niue is out-migration and depopulation.

This factor, coupled with the rise in life expectancy to 74 years for both men and women has resulted in an increase in the elderly age group and a high dependency rate. Government has established a National Population and Development Committee to formulate policies to discourage Niueans currently living in Niue from emigrating and to encourage Niueans living in New Zealand to return and resettle in Niue. But as incentives for their return have been unsuccessful so far, the

government for the time being is concentrating on those who are still on the island.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the status of the health services provided for the citizens of Niue is relatively good with 100 percent coverage, 100 percent skilled birth attendance, the status of maternal health provided for the women is also no exception. Niue has not experienced a maternal death since the early 1990s. Niue has a health referral system to New Zealand, which relies on early detection of complications. A high standard of health services provided for women and mothers in Niue through maternal and community awareness assists people make healthy choices with regards to lifestyle, behavior and attitude through improved knowledge on sexual health, family planning, gender equality and the empowerment of women. These programmes are integrated into the national health programme. Close partnership with NGOs and the private sector has resulted in programmes including peer educators for the promotion of awareness programmes on reproductive health, STIs and HIV/AIDS, prevention of NCDs etc.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Regarding women's empowerment, Niue has already ratified CEDAW and worked to increase awareness about women's human and legal rights and elimination of violence against women. Volunteer counselors have been trained and a counseling centre for women has been established. Women's participation in national and local government is high. Women also play a significant role in agriculture production and are the driving force behind village communities, churches and the

family. They are also active in maintaining cultural and promoting income generating activities.

Although a lot of work has been made on gender equality and the empowerment of women, one of the major constraints is still the minimal male involvement in the family due to the lack of awareness of the importance of co-parenting. Programmes are being implemented for men to participate in health and human rights programmes normally provided for women so they can become sensitized to family issues.

There are still sections in the community that are not receiving relevant health information from health educators. Schools do not provide comprehensive sexuality education and government is looking at how it can be strengthened.

Niue's major problem is under population. The lack of tertiary education and a range of employment opportunities will continue to contribute to the departure of young people from the country.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, Niue remains committed to ensuring a progressive agenda for ICPD Beyond 2014 and look forward to the deliberations of this ministerial segment of the meeting.

THANK YOU