
Translated from Arabic

Statement of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations at the 29th special session of the General Assembly on follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014

Please check against delivery

New York, 22 September 2014

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on becoming President of the current session of the General Assembly and for chairing this special session, which provides a valuable opportunity to review the progress made at the national and international levels with regard to population and their empowerment and development, and to renew our commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. This special session is the ideal way to introduce and promote the theme that you have proposed for this session of the General Assembly, namely the realization of sustainable development and the formulation of an ambitious post-2015 development agenda. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

The Programme of Action contains ambitious guiding principles for an appropriate response to population issues, with a particular focus on the needs of women, children, younger persons, older persons and persons with special needs. In order fully to enact those principles, we must all tackle the scourge of poverty, which is the most prominent and pressing challenge facing us. We must fulfil our commitment to eradicate poverty and incorporate population issues into the post-2015 development agenda.

Despite the progress made in realizing the principles and objectives of the Programme of Action, there are still many obstacles in our way. The most significant are as follows:

1. Commitments with regard to international partnerships for development have not been fulfilled. Developed countries have fallen short of their responsibility to support the national plans of developing countries. Indeed, some donor States have made their assistance to developing countries depend on certain conditionalities that are largely political in nature.
2. Certain States have interfered in other States' affairs and specificities in an attempt to impose their own customs and way of life on other societies. We must abide by the principle on

which we all agreed in the Programme of Action, namely the need to fully respect States' sovereignty, specificities and social, cultural and moral values.

3. Certain States have contravened the values of the Charter and United Nations resolutions by imposing illegal unilateral economic measures on developing countries. Such measures have had a significant impact on the economies of affected States, whose peoples have been denied their rights, particularly the right to development and a decent standard of life.

4. The continuation of foreign occupation is the main factor preventing peoples under occupation from enjoying freedom, dignity and development. Another problem has been the spread of international terrorism and *takfirist* ideology, which has violated human rights and destroyed cultural assets and development gains.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last two decades, Syria has made considerable progress in fulfilling its commitments to the principles and objectives of the Programme of Action. Numerous measures have been taken to support projects and programmes aimed at achieving human, economic and social development. Significant progress has been made towards realizing the millennium development goals, particularly in the areas of education and health. However, over the last three years, Syria has faced a vicious, systematic terrorist onslaught that has been supported by certain States Members of our Organization. Infected with *takfirist* ideology, the terrorists have lashed out against the country's achievements and sought to bleed Syrian society dry. Development gains have been reversed, and the Syrian people have been denied their safety, security and aspirations. Terrorists have driven thousands from their homes, sown anarchy, destroyed public and private property and poisoned young people's minds with sinister notions, including the rejection of others, denunciations of heresy, and suicide. They have recruited children. By portraying women in sexualized terms, they have deprived them of their humanity and made them strictly a means to satisfy the desires of men or, indeed, the targets of abduction and rape.

In responding to those exceptional circumstances, the Syrian Government has worked to build the capacities of ministries and agencies responsible for social affairs, the family, health and education. It has endeavoured to safeguard the gains made by Syrian society before the outbreak of the current crisis, particularly in the areas of health, education, gender equality and the provision of a safety net for all components of society. It has established several funds and programmes to ensure humanitarian social support for the victims of the crisis. It has allocated additional funds to create work opportunities for younger persons and women and to provide health care for women, particularly mobile surgeries for pregnant women. It has addressed rural and urban development

and the host societies of displaced groups. It has formulated national programmes for reconstruction and the return of refugees to their homes. It has adopted a range of measures to protect the family and its members, particularly teenagers, and to extend care and support to families, mothers, children and those injured in terrorist attacks, particularly girls, older persons, persons with disabilities and victims of human trafficking. It has formed close connections with national and international partners to implement those programmes and further their objectives. Because the United Nations programmes active in Syria face a funding shortfall, most of the burden for those activities has fallen on the Syrian Government.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Syria urgently needs genuine and unbiased international cooperation in order to bring an immediate end to the suffering of the Syrian people, fulfil their needs and restore the development gains, stability and security for which they yearn. Those goals can be achieved by supporting the Government and the Syrian people in their war on terrorism; by bolstering national development programmes in Syria without conditionalities or political considerations; and by immediately lifting all of the unilateral coercive economic measures that certain States have imposed on Syria outside the framework of international law.

Lastly, Mr. President, we wish to remind Member States of their moral, legal and humanitarian responsibility to support the concerns and rights of peoples under occupation, particularly the right to freedom from occupation and the right to development and dignity.

Thank you, Mr. President.