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Statement by

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,

During this week you have deliberated on matters that are of extreme importance to the well-being of humanity and to the challenges faced by Governments and the international community to attain sustainable development. Decisions on how many children to have and when to have them are among the most important that people can make. We must continue to ensure that people have the right to make those decisions in a free and responsible manner, and that they have access to a wide range of safe and effective methods of contraception so that they have the means to realize their reproductive

goals. We also must continue making strides to assure that all people attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. Worryingly, your review of the evidence has shown that, although considerable progress has been made in improving sexual and reproductive health, low-income countries and the poor in all countries continue to lag behind the rest in achieving the goals set by the international community. Your work this week has made an important contribution in galvanizing efforts to close the gaps still remaining and accelerate the achievement of the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action on reproductive health.

Your work, however, cannot stop here. There is precious little time left to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of which, achieving universal reproductive health is probably the most important for the well-being of women, children and their families. That is reason enough for redoubling our efforts to reach it.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, let me congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau for guiding both the preparation and the deliberations of this session of the

Commission. Your hard work and, especially, that of Mr. de Bassompierre in facilitating the informal consultations, have paid good dividends. You can all be proud of what has been achieved.

I wish you, your colleagues at the Bureau and all the delegates who participated in this session, a relaxing weekend and a safe trip home for those who came from afar.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.