

*Routine Proceedings*

If we look at what that means the empowerment of women is also the empowerment of family. It is the woman in many families who is the centrepiece and the anchor. Therefore if we accentuate her role, her opportunities, her rights we clearly buoy up the entire family which many times she is responsible for.

Governments agreed not only to talk but to act, to take action on reducing mortality rates of mothers and infants, on ensuring equal education opportunities for girls, access to employment opportunities for women, and pay more attention to the reproductive health needs of adolescence and improving access and availability of basic health care.

At the end of the day when it came time to commit our fellow world citizens came to a degree of consensus which was unprecedented at similar population conferences in the past. I know that before going to Cairo there was controversy on various elements of the draft action plan. Yet that seemed to dominate the discussion, certainly the media attention and we forgot that as a complicated, complex diverse world this document enjoyed before the first gavel ever hit the desk 90 per cent agreement.

Why is 90 per cent agreement on a document such a bad thing? If I got 90 per cent at high school or university I would have been a rocket scientist. If one of our parties would have attained 90 per cent of the seats across the country we would have been superstars in terms of our political organization.

• (1010)

Why is it that when a diverse world comes together and agrees on 90 per cent of the document somehow it has to be seen as a negative or a failure because we have the last ten yards to go and those are the toughest?

There was more that united this world in its action plan than divided it. One of the most important things to come out of that conference was that delegates took a new approach to population issues. Instead of looking strictly at demographic targets, just the numbers, they widened their focus in an important way. They recognize that social and economic development is central to achieving a balance between the number of people on earth and their demands in terms of food, shelter and other basic necessities of life.

It was a real coming together of north and south, east and west, rich and poor. No one was dictating to anyone. Those days are clearly over. There was very much a question of consensus rather than suggesting by force or implications.

It was also heartening that the international migration issue was treated in a truly comprehensive and balanced way for the first time in a forum of this kind. Governments recognized not only the negatives in terms of the mass of humanity that is on the move, some 150 million people strong, but also the positive

benefits of migration. We were also able to bring one of those positive messages.

Despite the challenges and difficulties that still confront us, we were also prepared to admit that the force of migration helped to build a country called Canada. That was something the international representatives, both NGOs and governments, had not heard enough of in terms of simply talking about the problems rather than also about the advantages.

Delegates also stressed the need for increased international co-operation to deal with the challenges that current migration trends present to all of us. We talked about prevention, protection and then integration of those migrants.

[Translation]

The Cairo program of action in international migration is the first to have been approved by this many nations.

[English]

It now provides a springboard for further progress on the international political level and on the daily operational level. Cairo has given Canada a relevant and practical tool for advancing its international migration agenda.

We need more bilaterals, more of a regime between and among countries if we are to deal competently with that movement of humanity. One country cannot do it alone. Canada should not be expected to do it alone. No country has the answers to that kind of dilemma.

If we put regimes together, if more countries keep their front doors open a little, it will make life not only easier and more bearable for those individuals seeking a home, it will also make life easier and more bearable for those countries that have done their share.

No one is responsible for the entire problem. Rather, we are each responsible for our share of that situation. We as members of the global community met in Cairo with a daunting task before us. There were many who predicted we would dissolve into disagreement, discord and disarray. We proved them wrong and we proved there is consensus and commitment in the world community to tackle global problems not only effectively but together.

The last message Canada brought on the closing days was that while the agreement provides us with that road map and that consensus, the agreement is only as good as its implementation. That too is a uniquely practical Canadian application of not simply being happy about an agreement but really rolling up our shirt sleeves making sure that individual member states follow up on the commitments we tied together in Cairo. Only then can we say that truly Cairo was a success. It clearly started as that and we in this country in co-operation with the United Nations will ensure that the individuals for whom this plan is intended will certainly see the fruits of our labour.