

Mr. President, distinguished delegates:

In Canada's capital city of Ottawa, where I now live and work, there is something called the "Earth Clock." Located in the entrance of the building containing the International Development Research Centre, it looks a lot like an ordinary clock as it relentlessly ticks away.

But there is a difference.

It links the planet's population to the mother earth from which all of us draw life. And this clock graphically illustrates the challenge that has drawn each of us to this conference in Cairo. Because with each minute the clock marks an increase of 180 people and a decrease of 20 acres around the globe.

Population and Sustainable Development

In Cairo, we have taken an important, and historic, step by agreeing that population is not just about numbers and fertility levels. It's also about extreme poverty, mass illiteracy, the death of mothers at childbirth, coupled with unconscionable consumption habits in the developed countries. These problems defy simple solutions.

The Draft Program of Action — which Canada supports — lays out the challenges before us. And after arduous negotiation we are agreed on 90 per cent of the document. So I take heart that this conference, like others before it, is helping us to move forward as a human family, to a better quality of life.

We look back on interrelated gatherings — the Children's Summit, the Earth Summit, the Human Rights Conference — and measure real progress. But the clock is still ticking. . . . What can we do to slow it down?

Canada's approach is straightforward. We want to nurture healthy societies where every man, woman and child can reach their potential.

I would like to talk about five aspects of population and development that Canadians feel are especially important:

- empowering women;
- the environment;
- partnership on a multilateral basis;
- reproductive health issues; and
- migration issues.