

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY SYED YUSUF RAZA GILANI, PRIME  
MINISTER OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN ON “WORLD  
POPULATION DAY” 11<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2010**

Minister for Population Welfare,  
Ministers & Ministers of State,  
Members of the Parliament,  
Excellencies,  
Government functionaries,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Assalam-o-Alaikum**

It gives me immense pleasure in joining you today to observe the World Population Day held annually under the auspices of United Nations to highlight the importance of various issues linked with escalating population in member countries.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Two years ago, when our elected government shouldered the responsibility of serving the country, our homeland was at the brink of political chaos. Due to the tragic death of our great visionary leader Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto, the nation had virtually lost the sense of direction. Economic deprivation, scarcity of resources, internal strife and terrorism dominated the national scene. But by the grace of Allah, with the support of our masses and continued assistance of our friends, we have been able to address these challenges in a befitting manner and, today, I am proud to declare that Pakistan is steering ahead towards the path of prosperity, self reliance and economic well being. Our Government's policies have helped in confronting on one hand terrorism - the biggest challenge posed to our homeland's security and stability and on the other hand, the issue of rising poverty and economic meltdown.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I assure you that people's government has always been cognizant of the fact that rapid population growth has a direct nexus with poverty. I take pride in sharing that Pakistan People's Party is the only political party, that includes 'Population Planning' at its party manifesto. I understand that the current decade has been quite challenging in terms of financial opportunities given to the Ministry of Population Welfare. I am happy to note that despite the odds and challenges, Ministry of Population Welfare has been working with all dedication. I take this opportunity to convey my

heartiest felicitations and appreciation to the Ministry and Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan, Minister for Population Welfare for her untiring efforts and able leadership. My government, despite the critical financial crunch, has ratified reproductive health as a human right issue at the UN human right conference at Geneva in June, 2009.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I have no doubt in my mind that Population Welfare Programme already transferred to the provinces in 2002, would be fully taken over by the provincial governments and run through their own budget after 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment. However, I am equally convinced that the federation cannot afford to renounce its responsibility of addressing the population issue, which is cross-cutting in nature and at the center-stage of national development. All hopes of development and economic prosperity would flounder if we as a nation lose the focus and do not keep population issue in the spotlight.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Our visionary leader (Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed), had realized Population as ‘the challenge’ for Pakistan and recognized the inter-linkages between population and development almost two decades ago. She represented the Islamic world at the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) in 1994 at Cairo. Her vision about woman’s reproductive rights (which were yet unclaimed) and focus on population stabilization was hailed globally. I appreciate the Ministry of Population for translating her vision into reality by setting up Safe Mother Homes, and Multi-Purpose Service Centers in peri-urban and reaching out to the poorest of the poor in the rural areas. However the economic crunch dictates us to think out of the box and Ministry of Population Welfare is in the forefront, and leads us with the solutions.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

As proposed by the Minister for Population Welfare, I am pleased to declare the year 2011 as “Population Year” to highlight various issues linked with Population and Development with focus upon involvement of different segments of the society to propagate the benefits of birth spacing for better health of mothers and children in conjunction with the Islamic teachings.

I thank you all, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Pakistan Paindabad.

\*\*\*\*\*