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**SPEECH OF MR. ALBERTO K. FUJIMORI, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF PERU DURING THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY AT
THE WORKSHOP ON "THE NEW POPULATION DECADE, 1994-2004"**

As follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, on August 11-12, 1995, the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development organized a workshop for Andean Region parliamentarians on "The New Population Decade, 1994-2004." The two-day workshop was sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Peruvian Institute of Responsible Parenthood (INPPARES) and the Multidisciplinary Association on Population Education (AMIDEP). Present were parliamentarians and representatives of non-governmental organizations from Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Parliamentarians from Argentina, Chile and Paraguay also participated. A parliamentarian from Japan and one from Sweden also participated as specially-invited guests. The workshop was inaugurated by President Alberto K. Fujimori who expressed his government's commitment to family planning, the human right of each couple to choose the number and spacing of their children.

The following is the transcript of the speech Mr. Fujimori gave August 11, 1995 at the Hotel Sheraton in Lima Peru, during the inauguration of the workshop for Andean region parliamentarians on "The New Population Decade, 1994-2004".



Distinguished Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I celebrate the fact that Peru is the headquarters for this sub-regional workshop, whose subject is very topical not only for Peru, but for the entire world. And I doubly celebrate the fact that it is Latin American parliamentarians who are engaging in in-depth discussions and debate on aspects and problems of such enormous importance in the framework of the effort which all our countries are making to improve the quality of life through national development. I thus give you the warmest welcome in the name of the people of Peru and its new government.

Precisely in my government's inaugural address I expressed my concern, which is an old one, about family planning. More concretely, for the right of the poorest families of our country to be informed about all natural and artificial birth control methods, so that they can freely choose the one that fits their legitimate interests. As no one in Peru ignores, making this right a reality, I repeat, legitimate, for the poorest families who, as one imagines, are those who have the most children, means nothing more than democratizing the information and access to the means of family planning.

For some time, for decades, the use of modern contraceptives has been firmly established within the upper and middle classes of our society, and this cannot be ignored by those who oppose reaching poorer people with information and access to all family planning methods.

I have been clear and categorical in stating that population policy is a matter for the state and a debatable matter, certainly, as all matters are, which concerns human life, part of which will be debated at this workshop.

In terms of the Catholic Church, I will not concede more attribution to it than its role in the realm of religion and spirituality. That there are this type of, let's call it "voices," does not alarm or disturb me: I believe that this is natural in the process of modernization and social change.

However respectable institutions are, they have to bring themselves up to date, get with the times. This has occurred more than once in the last five hundred years when religious dogmatism has had to give way.

I offer some historical examples related to this case. The first, is of Miguel de Servet, a Fifteenth Century Spanish physiologist and theologian who discovered that blood circulates through the lungs. And he expounded the hypothesis of pulmonary circulation. The Inquisition condemned him to death but he escaped. But then he was publicly burned in Geneva. Before Servet, it was believed that the liver was the center of circulation. Today, we all know that Servet was correct, and his contribution to humanity was immense.

And today, in a country like Peru with a high level of population growth, there are positions which unhappily are not popular, which have replaced the facts of "you will give birth with pain" with the Sacred Scriptures's "you will be filled with children".