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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF

NAFIS SADIK

BY

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Transcribed by Ron Nerio

RICHARD JOLLY: This is Richard Jolly interviewing Dr. Nafis Sadik on May 20th, 2002 in New York. Good morning, Nafis.

NAFIS SADIK: Good morning.

RJ: Well, it's a great pleasure to have this chance to interview you. And as with all the other interviews, we would like to start with you saying a bit about your background, growing up in India was it, or initially?

NS: Yes.

RJ: And something about your family and your early education.

NS: My family came from a place called Jaunpur, in India—the United Provinces at that time, now Uttar Pradesh. It's about forty miles from Benares or Varanasi. My grandfather had moved there from the village. He had been educated, obviously, by his father. I don't know that much about my great-grandfather, but my grandfather was obviously someone who made something of his life in a professional way. He was a lawyer. And I remember my grandmother telling us, "You know that your grandfather is a member of the municipality." It was like a big thing in the little city, or town, of Jaunpur.

And the stories of my father's childhood, as recounted by my grandmother, were that my grandfather was very keen on education and insisted that all his sons be well educated. Story has it that my father was so brilliant that his age was reduced [*sic*; increased] by a couple of years to enable him to matriculate at the age of fourteen, or whatever was the minimum age. He was entered in school when he six, but his age was written down as eight. It took him a long time to get his right age recorded, because generally parents registered their children's ages lower than they actually were, not higher. He was increased by two years and spent a long time trying to convince people that he was two years younger.

Anyway, my father was well educated. He was an economist and a lawyer, and did his Mater's and law degree at Allahabad. My uncles were also extremely well educated. At that time, bright people joined the civil service. It was called the ICS (Indian Civil Service) at that time—the British civil service, but the Indian version of it. My father didn't get into the civil service, again because my grandmother says because she prayed so hard that he wouldn't because if he did that would mean that he would have to go away to England for a year or two. Apparently, they went to England to study, and she didn't want him to leave.

But anyway, he got into the accounts finance services. My uncle in fact later went into the civil service. I don't remember the stories about his early career except that he was posted all over the country. He used to tell us stories about how he had seen a lot of India, and he was going to make sure that all his children saw and knew India as it should be known, not just the place they lived in. Growing up in India, since I was the eldest in the family—

RJ: Of how many children?

NS: Six of us, and I was a girl. I also recall how much my grandparents adored me. My father had two sisters who had died young, and only one sister grew to adulthood. In fact, she also died of tuberculosis in her early twenties. She had been married and had two children. So in fact, my grandparents loved daughters. My grandmother was so happy when I was born. So, contrary to the norm in Asia at that time, for me personally I was a very much wanted child. Again, I remember my early years. My grandfather used to wait for me to come back from school whenever he was visiting us in Calcutta, and wait on the porch with his arms out and I would run into them.

These are my childhood memories. When we went to our family home in Jaunpur, which I recall as a huge house. I went back to see it fifty years later, and it is not that huge a house.

But in my child's imagination, it was this big courtyard that I used to run across so that my grandfather could pick me up. And he had this big portrait of me with two teeth missing, just at this entrance of this big house. I grew up as a child very much of the view that boys and girls were not different. This I say in retrospect, because I felt very much loved and wanted, made a fuss of.

My father was a great, great believer in equality of opportunity for his children. Indeed, he started that with my mother. My mother was married, I think, at fourteen and a half, or something like that—obviously not very well educated. She could read and write. I went to school at the age of six. She had a tutor that came to the house, from nine to three, to teach her.

RJ: For your mother?

NS: My mother had a tutor. She learned history, geography, English, literature, and so on. This went on for about seven, eight years. We were all born—I was born, and my brother and my sister, who were a year or two years apart—and she still had the tutor. I can't imagine another wife being so dutiful and agreeable to have children and to have a tutor and study. But if you had met my mother, you would never have known that she had no formal schooling. She was well educated at home.

RJ: This is the late 1930s, or early 1940s?

NS: I was born in 1929, so she must have been being educated from the word go—1929. I think I went to school in 1936. My brother and sister, by the way, didn't go to school until they were ten or eleven. They were educated at home. I was sent to school because I was so naughty that I needed school discipline. But what I am saying is that my father was a very great believer in education. So if you had met my mother, you wouldn't think that she hadn't been to college because she knew various poets and spoke English reasonably well. She could hold her

own in conversation. I also remember, when I was a child, we had this huge extended family. And since we lived in Calcutta, which was a large city, members of the family came for various reasons, to shop, for weddings, just for a holiday, or for treatment. Holidays for the sons were adjusted for the school year, but daughters were pulled out for whatever reason and always came with the parents. My father would say, "If any girl comes to this house during the school year, she is going to school with my daughters." And you know, my mother had some young cousins who were our age—a few years older. I remember this aunt of mine was enrolled in school with me for three months. The nuns used to go along with it—"Well, you know, father is coming to enroll another girl." He would just put them into school. He said, "Everyone has to be educated."

RJ: Where did your father get these convictions from?

NS: I don't know. He said, "Without education no country can prosper and no individual can prosper." And he believed this, for girls and boys. It wasn't like he did it only for the boys. It was for girls as well.

RJ: And where did he get his gender convictions from?

NS: I don't know. I think it was just like himself. When I think of my grandparents—my grandfather died when I was about eight or nine or something. My grandmother lived with us till I was twelve. You know, we adored her. She was like whatever my father said or did was absolutely the last word. So she sort of supported everything. And he just had the conviction on his own, I think. We had a library in our house. He read a lot, obviously. So in Calcutta, as I said, we had all these family members always visiting, so we never had our rooms. My brothers and sister and myself, we never had our room. We slept like in a dorm and we used to complain like anything. My mother used to say, "Never complain,

because think about it that we are in a position that people can come and live with us. It's a blessing." But my father said the only room that can never be given to anybody was the children's room, the library The library he said belonged to the children.

It was quite interesting. In retrospect, it was all his focus on learning. In our house, if you read a book, it was a wonderful thing. Father would be pleased. He spent a lot of time with us at that time. When we came to Pakistan, he didn't have as much time for us. But until we came to Pakistan, he spent time with us. I was extremely good at mathematics, so a lot of my toys were—you know, you used to get these books with algebra problems and geometry and whatnot. He would help. He said, "Nafis, what are we going to do today? Which game are we going to play today?" His thing was, "Sleep on it. If you can't do it, sleep on it. It will come to you in your sleep, because your mind is always working." So in the morning, I had the answer. "Ah, I've got it in my mind." I was just thinking about how children get influenced by what elders tell you—the elders that you love or respect.

RJ: The struggle for independence—was your father concerned?

NS: Again, later in my life, in the late 1940s—civil servants were not necessarily involved in the thing. But I recall, in 1945 or so, all of us got very much enthused about this independence—

RJ: You were then sixteen or so.

NS: I was then fifteen or sixteen, something like that. A lot of the Muslim families whose daughters were friends of all of us, and their parents were friends of my parents, used to get together and say, "We must do something." For example, we decided we would form a Red Cross brigade. I don't know why we thought we were all going to fight for something. I was

given the charge to—I didn't know anything, but I went to a hospital and volunteered to learn emergency aid. Then I used to hold classes for the Muslim girls.

Then I don't know how, but I did something in physical education. Again, for all these older women—physical education. Somehow we had it in our minds that we would have to go out and fight. Those were such funny days. But my father's thing with education was quite a passion. He was very much of the view that everyone had to be educated.

I went to a convent and the nuns were always trying, now in retrospect I think, to convert me. Some girls did convert. Most of the girls in the school, Loretto House, were not Catholics. Most were Hindus and a few Muslims. I wanted to go to college. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, whether engineering or medicine. Anyway, I decided that I would do physics and chemistry and biology and thus decide on my profession. I wanted to do physics and chemistry and biology and then decide on my profession. There was none of that in the college attached to the school.

RJ: Which was the school?

NS: Loretto House. The nuns then got some teachers especially for me so that I would stay in the college. Can you believe that? And they even gave me a scholarship of some very small amount. But still, it was a scholarship to keep me in the college. And they told my father, "You know, she must stay here. She is brilliant. She must do this and that, et cetera." So he said, "Fine." Then they told my father that they were giving me this fellowship and this would help to pay the fees, because the fees would have to be increased to pay for the professor. He said, "Oh, that's good for you. That will be your pocket money." And the nuns were so shocked. So he said to them, "But she earned it, not me. I am responsible for her education." So the money was mine. It was the first money I earned.

RJ: How fascinating.

NS: Yes, he was a great believer that what you earn and what you negotiate is yours. When we were growing up also later—I remember when we were a bit older, eighteen or nineteen, we wanted to go to parties, and my mother would say no. We would sulk and try to ask our father to intercede—a lot of psyching and anger. He said, "Come here and we'll all sit down. Let's have a cup of tea. Why all these glum faces? Why is everyone angry?" I said, "I am upset because I want to go and all my friends are going." He said, "But that's not the way to get your way. You have to negotiate. You must convince us why you must be allowed. Convince your mother. Convince me. Once you convince us, and we are convinced—but if you can't win the argument, then that's that."

So it was like he encouraged us to argue, and my mother used to often say, "Why are you encouraging them to argue? Just tell them to listen." But my mother used to go along with him. "Well, indulge your father," kind of thing. Then we would argue and sometimes he would allow—in retrospect I think of all these things—allow us to win the argument so we would feel we had won an argument. He would say to my mother, "Tara, I think they made a point." She wanted to say no, but I think he said it in a way that you must let them win sometimes otherwise it's like your command is your command. So sometimes we would be allowed to go and sometimes we wouldn't.

He had a very interesting way of approaching us, which was very unusual. I looked at other people's parents and they never bothered to have a relationship. I think a lot of it was due to the fact that I was never willing to give in, you see. I always argued. I think parents don't like children arguing, so they either give in or they have to find a way to deal with it which allows them to argue and yet appeals to something or the other.

RJ: But it is still a very clever and very mature way.

NS: Very clever. I think it made us also then more realistic about what we could or could not do. I used to say to my sister, "All the battles I have to fight, and whatever I got then you get automatically."

RJ: They went along with that.

NS: Yes, yes, they also always wanted it, whatever it was. But it was I that had had to fight for it because I am the eldest. They didn't ever have to.

RJ: What about the big famine in Calcutta in 1943-1944? Did that make any impression at all?

NS: Not particularly, because we heard about the famine, we read about the famine. And some families that we knew, their parents or the father was accused of hording food. A lot of articles used to come out in the newspapers. I remember my father discussing this, what a terrible thing. But we didn't have any direct contact with that.

Later, the independence thing went on and I remember Mr. [Mohammad Ali] Jinnah came to Calcutta. He had a meeting with all the Muslim civil servants to try to find out what disciplines there were if he had to form a government in Pakistan, and which of these people would be willing to go with him. I remember that one of the visits they paid—the parliamentary political families were families also that we knew, and there were a lot of girls in their family who were great friends of mine. So I used to also go sometimes to meetings.

I remember going to a meeting where Mr. Jinnah was the chief guest with Mr. Suharwardy. He was a politician. His daughter had hosted this big function in the evening. Mr. Jinnah came to speak to us and we were all so impressed. He spoke English extremely well. But I'll tell you a story which I think Pakistanis hate. It impressed me so much. It became evening

prayer time, and so everyone said they had to go and say their prayers. But Mr. Jinnah said, "Well, let everyone go to say their prayers. I will sit here and smoke a cigarette." I thought that was so cool. I was extremely impressed. I came back and told my parents. My mother said, "You shouldn't go around saying that." I said, "But look at him. He doesn't care what people think about him. He is just honest and straightforward." I thought it was such an admirable thing. It was for me something fantastic. But everyone else said, "Oh, you shouldn't go around telling a story like that." So I never told anyone this story. But in my mind I thought it was such a wonderful story and made him in my eyes a wonderful person.

RJ: There was a period then, surely, when many people in India followed Bertrand Russell—or followed the new Bertrand Russell's writings, this strong, non-religious approach. "Let's analyze and talk about things as they are," was very important. From what I'm hearing, that was Jinnah's position?

NS: Jinnah's position at that time wasn't based on religion as such. He was more legalistic. He was, in fact, a member of the Congress Party to start with. He tried to persuade the Congress Party that you should not lose all the Muslims in the party, and we must make an accommodation because it is a very large group and they feel that their rights have been denied to them. And the way to give them their political rights is to allow for proportional representation. In whichever localities or communities they are in the majority then they should have a proportionate majority of those seats.

The Congress Party refused that. He said, "Well, then you are not for the rule of law. You are for the majority tyrannical rule, which is not a democratic process. A democratic process requires that everyone must have their rights represented parliament." This I read, of

course, afterwards. But I am telling you why he left. Then they tried hard to keep him in the Congress Party, because he was obviously quite a brilliant lawyer.

He then decided to join the Muslim League. And once he joined the Muslim League, he became convinced that the Muslims in India would not have a future because their rights would always be denied to them. I think later on, perhaps—I am not certain—I think proportional representation was sort of being suggested, but you know that when you start agreeing after a time has passed, then that is too little. And then probably the Muslims demanded more. So his words and his first speeches were that the state of Pakistan is for everyone. It is not only for the Muslims and everyone is equal. He was a great believer in law and the rule of law and the right of every individual to be respected in that law by the law.

But you know, he stayed alive only one year after Pakistan was formed. We moved to Pakistan in 1947. As children, we just thought automatically my father would go to Pakistan. But you know, it was quite an agonizing decision for them because all the family was from India. They had some property and family. It meant that we were going to another country and leaving all your family behind. My father and his two brothers—he had two brothers and only the one sister, who had grown and who had died, leaving three children. All three were different branches of the government service, and they all opted for Pakistan.

RJ: But your father went as a fairly senior—

NS: A senior person, yes.

RJ: What was his position?

NS: He was, to start with, posted to Delhi to be on the Joint Properties Commission. It was to decide on the properties that would go to India or Pakistan. We arrived, our first journey from Calcutta to Delhi, on August 19 or something like that, a few days after independence.

RJ: 1947?

NS: Yes, independence. In fact, we celebrated Independence Day at the Calcutta Club in Calcutta on August 16th. This was still India because we hadn't left Calcutta to come to Delhi. At the end of the celebration, they sang, "Jana Gana Mano," the Indian National anthem now. I used to sing very well at one time, and I joined in because I love the song. Everyone was looking at me as a Muslim singing this song, knowing I was going to Pakistan.

RJ: Does this suggest that you grew up with an early iconoclasm built in? Did you enjoy it?

NS: I think my father encouraged us to be individuals.

RJ: And free thinkers.

NS: Free thinkers and to think for ourselves. He had a lot of philosophy books. He had all the English literature books. English literature was something we loved—all the poets. We read all the poets, all kinds of books. He said no book in the library was taboo. It didn't matter what it was about. So we also read the sex books.

RJ: But how did your Catholic teachers in Loreto College—

NS: Well, Loreto Convent—

RJ: Convent and then college.

NS: By that time I was more independent, but in school they used to I think always try to put me down. I remember in moral science I used to have these arguments with them. They used to say, "You know, marriages are made in heaven." I used to say, "But in my religion, marriage is a contract." I did my senior Cambridge at fifteen, so I was pretty young to be arguing with the nuns. But in my religion—I must have tossed my head and said, "In my religion, it's a contract." They would get very upset and say, "Divorce is a sin." "Not in my

religion it's not a sin, because it's a contract that has been broken." Where I got all this from I don't know because it's not like I studied Islam.

The nuns used to say to me, "But your sister is so good at moral science, and why are you so bad?" I used to ask my sister, "What are you studying in moral science if you are so good and I am so bad?" But it was obviously that when they said all this, she said, "OK."

RJ: She gave the right answers.

NS: And I gave the wrong answers. The school-leaving exams, O levels, were sent to England, to Cambridge—it was during the war—to be corrected. I think I did my senior Cambridge in 1944. The results were to come in early 1945. We had gone on a holiday with my parents to a place called Pournia. My uncle was posted there. And the results were not out, so my parents thought I must have failed and that's why the nuns were not informing us. I also thought that something terrible has obviously happened.

I think they made a telephone call, which was a big thing in those days, to the convent in Calcutta to ask and found that something had happened, or whatever. The results had just come in, and I had done brilliantly. I had gotten like eight distinctions. I, myself, was quite surprised because all through my school I always got very good marks in mathematics, but in other subjects I was given not low marks, but not at the top. Even in scripture I got an "A." I had a very good memory and I could analyze quite well. I think the nuns felt quite bad that they were trying to put me down so much and suddenly I had emerged. So you know, it was quite a thing. It was after that that the nuns decided that they must keep me in the school and college.

But the nuns' influence was basically—they didn't teach us catechism, but we knew a lot about the scriptures. We knew a lot about Christianity as such. They didn't denigrate other religions and just said that the Catholic approach was so good. But I remember having many

arguments with them. And yet, I really adored my teachers because they were really very, very good, and they were very interesting. There were many Irish nuns. They played basketball with us. I was on the basketball team, on the badminton team. So it was good fun. I enjoyed my growing up years. All the dramas we did were Catholic dramas.

RJ: Do you remember any particular person or teacher—

NS: Oh, our favorite was called Mother Aluigi. She was Australian, and she was wonderful. She was much more human. She covered up when you made a mistake sometimes—that kind of person. So all the girls loved her and loved going to her. We had a Mother John the Baptist who was very cruel, we thought, and yet she was a very good basketball player. And the Mother Superior was Mother Consiglio. We said, "She is just run by Mother John the Baptist. Whatever John the Baptist says, Mother Superior does." But you know, they were good, fun years in spite of anything.

RJ: And have you kept in touch with any of the fellow students at all?

NS: The students—a few of them, yes. The Loreto Convent had their 200th anniversary several years ago. I got a letter from one of my friends in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, to say that they had asked for names and that I would be getting an invitation. Of course, I never got an invitation because I think they found out what I was doing. I think, but I don't know.

RJ: So the school didn't invite you because of your UNFPA (UN Population Fund)—

NS: I think. But some years ago, I think in 1999, the government of India arranged for me to visit Calcutta and told the school, "She wants to come and visit."

RJ: One of their most distinguished graduates.

NS: Yes, but by this time there were no more nuns from outside. There were lay teachers, mainly. I think one or two nuns, but generally the school was not run by the nuns

anymore. There were obviously Catholics. So I asked them, I said, "When the children ask me, 'so what do you do?,' as they are sure to ask me," because they arranged a big assembly, they said, "You say what you think." I said, "Well, I'm not sure I should say 'family planning.'" They said, "Well, maybe not, but you can talk about whatever you like."

So in fact, I talked to them about population. The senior students—the young people didn't—but the senior students did ask all the right questions. "In India, are our numbers too high?" "Is our rate of growth too high?" "What do you suggest?," and things like that. I said, "Well, let women control their own fertility."

RJ: Now one more thing I didn't ask about was whether [Mohandas]Gandhi came into your consciousness at the time.

NS: No. Mr. Gandhi was very much around, but to be very honest we were not taught to think about—the school didn't talk about politics at all. But in our home environment, and our friends and all that, we didn't think much of him because we thought that he was always trying one-upmanship and things like that.

RJ: On the Hindu side.

NS: On the Hindu side, yes. Though later, I think, people used to think that maybe he was much better than many of the other Hindu leaders as far as Muslims were concerned and that he was genuinely interested in a united India. I remember when he was killed how, in Pakistan, everyone was waiting with bated breath to find our whether it was a Muslim or a Hindu. I remember my parents talking about, "We hope it's not a Muslim. It would be terrible for the Muslims in India."

But you know, someone like Rabindranath Tagore—now he had some influence in all our lives because we read all his poetry, and we thought a lot about him and his philosophy. We

didn't have so much of a philosophy. "Jana Mana Gana," the song, is written by him. So we used to think of him as a great patriot and a great person—both Muslims and Hindus.

RJ: You didn't know Amartya Sen's family in any way at that time?

NS: No, though we were in Calcutta. There were many Hindus in my school, and many of them I still keep up with.

RJ: I think we should come on to your decision to study medicine in Karachi.

NS: I started, actually, in Calcutta. I did one year there. I wasn't sure that my parents were going to allow me—though my father was so keen on education—whether it extended to a daughter having a career.

RJ: Really? After all the things you said about him?

NS: Yes, but I wasn't sure. I got educated. I had been to college. And already people were trying to arrange marriages for me. I remember going on the same holiday. The senior Cambridge results hadn't come. At night, I overheard a conversation between my mother and my aunt saying, "Well, this very good boy that we know in the ICS—he is coming tomorrow, or the day after, or whatever. It would be a wonderful match for Nafis, and she is going to be sixteen next year." I overheard all this. I got up and made such a shinding. I can't believe it. I wept and cried. I said, "I don't know what terrible things are being done to me." I went to my father and not to my mother.

My father packed up and left the next day. We all left the next day. My uncle kept saying, "But you don't have to leave." I adored my uncle and did not did not want to hurt him. My father said, "She is so unhappy and so upset that I have to take her back." I felt bad. Everyone's holiday was ruined, I suppose. I didn't say I had to go. I just said, "I am most unhappy, and I most upset that all of this is going around behind my back."

My mother kept saying, "This is our job. This is our duty." "I don't care," I said. "Whose duty? It's my duty." I mean, I think I was quite brash as a young child as well as an older person. So I am just saying we moved out, and I was always now worried that this is now my lot, to be married off. So when I decided, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to do engineering or medicine. All I wanted was to be somebody, in my mind. Whenever someone used to ask me, "What do you want to do?," I said, "Well, I'm not sure, but I want to be somebody that makes a difference."

Then I decided myself that engineering was not a profession that I could really ask to go into because everyone would laugh. It was not a profession that women went into. I was excellent at math and physics and I had done that. I did my intermediate science in the two years of college. I did everything. I did all many subjects as I did in school, because I took physics, biology, chemistry, and math. I did Urdu, because that was compulsory. I wasn't so good, but I learned hard in Urdu, English, and French, because we had to have another language. So I did all kinds of subjects.

Then I decided I wanted to do medicine, I told my uncle that I wanted to do medicine. So my uncle said, "It's no problem, I'm sure. Your father is so fanatical about education." I said, "But I'm not sure because everyone is trying to arrange for me to get married. I certainly don't want to be married to anyone. I don't even know who these people are that are asking." So he talked to my father. My father was most upset: "How could you go to your uncle to ask this?" To show that he really cared about education, he took me to all interviews for getting into medical school himself. I remember that as I way to show to me that he still supported education. I got into medical school—Calcutta Medical College.

RJ: This was in 1946?

NS: Yes.

RJ: I thought this was Karachi.

NS: No, no. Calcutta. I did my senior Cambridge in 1944. I did my intermediate science in 1946. And I got into medical school then in September of 1946 in Calcutta. But I only did one year, and then we came to Karachi. So after the first year, I came into Dow Medical College Karachi in November 1947.

In Calcutta, there were very few girls, especially Muslim girls. There were just two of us—another friend of mine and I, who had been in school together. Her father was a doctor. We were both in medical school in Karachi. Many years later, in Dacca, Bangladesh, two men came up to me at a function and said, "Ah, we were in college with you in Calcutta!" They looked so much older. I said, "You couldn't possibly!" I wanted to hide and disassociate myself from them. But they must have been because they said, "We remember you because you were the only two Muslim girls in the class, and we were so many."

Anyway, I came to Karachi, and Dow Medical College was just starting and was in its second year. So it was just the second year of Karachi Medical School. I think the first batch had fifteen people who had come from somewhere else. I was in the second batch.

RJ: And how many women?

NS: I think there were just two women in that class?

RJ: That was your friend and yourself.

NS: No.

RJ: No, your friend stayed in Calcutta.

NS: The class senior to me had two girls. In my class were six girls—six out of twenty-four or twenty-five, something like that. I graduated in 1951. My mother, even till the last day

of medical school, used to say to me, "Get married and you will get lots of clothes and lots of jewelry." You know, family members used to say to her, "Your daughter is never going to get married. She will be so old by the time she comes out of medical school." I was going to be twenty-two or something like that. "She will be so old that nobody will marry her." You know, all that kind of thing. So my mother was getting quite worried. Marriage was how you were settled. If you had a career, you were not settled.

I remember telling her, "You don't have to give me anything. I will get my own things. I will get my own clothes, my own jewelry." But when I graduated, my family members, including my mother, were so happy, so pleased. And after that, everything in the family was, "Ask Nafis." No matter who got ill, "Ask Nafis." I could do no wrong, and everyone consulted with me.

But you know, after I had a career, many of my girl cousins have had careers. We have now several lawyers, no physicians, many teachers, writers, or whatever—many women professionals after that. And all girls went to school. I think my father set that sort of standard.

My father also did that for all the boys, you see, because the family would send their boys after school matriculation to Calcutta, "Please find him a job." And my father said, "Please find him a job? He's only just finished school. He has to go to college." Then he would pay for their university. He would send them all to university. So once they found out, "Oh, he's going to send them to university," we had like ten, fifteen, twenty people living in our house, going to university.

RJ: How could your father afford this?

NS: I think he was always in debt. What people did do was sent us the ghee and the rice and the things from the villages—those kinds of things. But my mother used to always say that

we have no money because our money is distributed over many families. But I think he used to say, "It's an investment in people."

RJ: Now, when you were studying medicine, did any sense of social commitment get into the curriculum, or was it very technical?

NS: There was no public health aspect or community health aspect at all in the curriculum at that time, except that the hospital that was attached to the school was the civil hospital where you saw a lot of poor people—mainly poor people. I remember running for election in the college student union. I decided that we should have an all-girls student union. So I canvassed around, and lo and behold, we got elected. I was quite a good speechmaker. Where did this desire come from?

RJ: Were you fairly feminist?

NS: Not at all. I was not in any sense feminist, because you know all the boys were my friends. So I said to them, "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a women's union? We always have all boys, all boys." So all the boys said, "Yes, I think that's a good idea. Why not?" Nobody said to me, "What do you mean, women?" I wanted to be the general-secretary of the union, or the president—whatever it was called—but boys and girls and myself, we decided who we would ask to run for whatever. So we picked the slate, but with boys as well. So it wasn't like I said to all the girls, "We must push the boys out." I just said to the girls and to the boys—

RJ: Let's push the girls in.

NS: Yes. It would be nice that one time we should have all girls. So they said OK. The boys also went along, so obviously we got elected. Otherwise we wouldn't have because three quarters of the school were boys. But when we got elected, the professor who was in charge of

student affairs said this was an illegal election. He had an objection to an all girls union. So the whole school went on strike behind me.

RJ: Extraordinary.

NS: They went on a march to the minister with a huge placard: "Illegal action," or something like that. My father, who was then joint secretary of finance, was going with Iskander Mirza—who later became president, who used to live in the house adjoining, who was the secretary of defense—in a car to some meeting. Iskander Mirza said to my father, "Isn't that Nafis down the road?" Everybody knew everyone. My father said, "No, no, it couldn't be. She is in college." Of course he knew it was me.

When I went home in the evening, my father said, "What were you doing?" I said, "How do you know?" He said, "Well, I'm not sure that's the way to go around striking. You are supposed to go and present your case." I said, "Present our case and they don't listen, then what do you do?" Anyway, the strike only lasted a few days because we decided that we didn't want to miss exams, which were coming, so we all decided. We won. It was our victory, and we will just go hear it as such." So then we gave up the strike and went back to work.

RJ: Then who did they elect?

NS: There was no union. We decided that there would be no union until another set of elections would be held. And by this time I felt that we had made our point, so I wasn't so interested.

RJ: And the women remained the elected members.

NS: Yes.

RJ: But that must have been a quite significant experience in your growing up.

NS: I never thought too much about it. It wasn't feminist or anything. My preoccupation with girls' and women's needs and rights started much later in my life because I, myself, never experienced it.

RJ: Jump ahead to when you first became conscious of the women's struggle.

NS: The first time I really started becoming conscious about it was when I joined the army hospital as a civilian. My husband was in the army and we were posted in Abbotabad. It's a hill town where the Pakistan military academy is located. This commanding officer asked us if we would do some community service around the health center which the army had for the wives and children of army officers. It was outside of Abbotabad.

So I volunteered to do that. I went there once a week, sometimes twice a week. It was quite a ride out and all that. I started to deliver women at home kind of thing, or teach the midwife what needed to be done and what should not. I started to see that these women were so anemic and ill-nourished, or they had just gotten pregnant very quickly after the last delivery. There were women who had six or seven girls still looking for a boy. I used to say to these women, "You should not be pregnant for another year, for another two years," or whatever. They would first look at me like I really had come from the moon. I mean, where was I living? When they looked at me, startled, I used to say, "What do you mean? Why can't you do that?" "Oh, that's not for me to do. That's for my husband," or, "My family wants a son, therefore I have to have a son." "But you are ill," said I. And they would say, "So what. That's expected of us."

Then it started to dawn on me how little control these girls and women had over their own lives. I personally had never experienced it because I had real control over my life. I went to the commanding officer and asked him, "Could we not provide some contraceptives for this

center?" The commanding officer said, "We don't deal with those things." This was the 1950s. But I badgered him so much that he gave in, and gave me I think 5,000 or 6,000 rupees, or something like that, and said to me, "You will get into trouble, but I have had nothing to do with it. That is your money."

I bought some condoms and diaphragms, because those were the only things available. I, myself, actually didn't know much about family planning. I just learned it up for myself also. I read up and found out what I should do.

RJ: This was the mid-1950s?

NS: This was like 1954 or 1955, yes.

RJ: And this was mostly wives of soldiers?

NS: Most of them were wives of soldiers. There were some others also, but a lot of them were wives of soldiers. So here were wives of soldiers—soldiers who were somewhat educated, better paid. They had all of the facilities. Yet, these women are so anemic, not well nourished, and have so little control over their lives.

Anyway, the diaphragms were difficult for the women to use. Many of them had infections. So when I told them to use the condoms, they said, "Oh, no," you know. So I told whoever was in charge of arranging my trip, "Next time have the husbands of so-and-so, and so-and-so all around there, because I have to talk to them." They were wondering why I had to talk to the husbands. So anyway, the husbands were there. I told them that their wives couldn't get pregnant. One man said, "But that's what I've got a wife for. I want a son." I said, "You can want whatever you like. If you don't agree to what I am suggesting, then I am taking your wife, your wife, your wife"—there were three of them—"back to the hospital with me and I will keep

her there for two years." I couldn't do that. They were so shocked: "You can do that?" I said, "Of course, try me." The commanding officer was behind me.

Anyway, they did agree. One of them then got pregnant and I was so angry. I said now he had to sign this form. Silly things like that I did. But on the other hand, I looked after their entire families—mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts, uncles, grandfathers. Everyone they brought I examined and did whatever I could do. They started to trust me, so they knew that what I was suggesting was not because I wanted it, but because it was in their families' interest.

And most of those women—I never went back to find out what happened to all the women, but most of them, at least for the two years that we were there, didn't get pregnant. I was quite pleased by that. But that's where I started to get this consciousness, gradually.

Then, through the family planning program and all that, it was always being brought home to you. The wives couldn't decide, in consultation or without the husband's authority, to use a contraceptive.

RJ: Let's go back now. You went to the United States, to Baltimore.

NS: My father then got posted to the World Bank. The World Bank was just started not too long before, a few years before. He went as an executive director for Pakistan and six of the Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. He was posted to Washington. I had just graduated from medical school. Normally I would have gone to England, but because he was going to the States, my mother didn't want me to go away. So I got the internship at Baltimore City Hospitals under something called the Point IV Program.

RJ: President [Harry] Truman's program.

NS: President Truman's program, yes. Initially my internship was in medicine because they didn't have any openings in obstetrics. Then I did obstetrics for a year.

RJ: But you had wanted to do obstetrics.

NS: Yes, I had wanted to do obstetrics.

RJ: Because it became such a common interest.

NS: Also because that would be a specialty that I could go into. In Pakistan, people didn't go to women for general health or cardiology. I could do pediatrics. I could do obstetrics, gynecology. Not even anesthesiology was open at that time as a specialty that women went into. Most women went into obstetrics and gynecology. But in any case, I was interested in obstetrics and gynecology as a specialty. But later I very bored with it afterwards because I thought it was sort of repetitious.

Also for me, it was like I was telling these poor women what to do, but in fact they couldn't do it because it was not in their control. So that's how all this started to build in my mind. It was not like I was subjected, and therefore I grew up with it. For me, the experience was quite the opposite, because my husband also never told me or ordered me. I remember my father telling me that when my husband came to ask for my hand in marriage, and brought his elders—his aunt, which was the customary thing to do, even though we knew each other—my father is supposed to have told him, "You do realize that she expects to work." I was still in medical school. My husband is supposed to have said to him, "Don't I know it. I hear it every single day of my life."

RJ: And that has continued.

NS: I just said that I am used to working. I am not wasting my life and my education. I went into medicine and I am going to work in medicine.

RJ: What about your reactions to Baltimore? Did you find a big contrast?

NS: A huge contrast in the medical field, first of all. At that time, City Hospital was not very rich I think, so they did not have that many resources and not too many people. So you came as an intern and you didn't get any guidance, or you weren't attached to anyone to help you. And you were sort of just plunged into the thing. I was also determined that I wasn't going to let them think that I came from an underdeveloped country and therefore didn't know anything. I knew "everything." What I didn't know I spent a lot of time in the library reading up on. There they did so many more lab tests, and so many more investigations than I had ever heard of where I came from. Their writing of histories were a bit different. They used a lot of abbreviations like WEM—white elderly male—with SOB—shortness of breath. I would be looking at this history and hadn't a clue. SOB means something else in Pakistan.

Anyway, it took me a while. First, I didn't know whether I should ask were these standard abbreviations that I didn't know about. Finally, I decided that if you don't know, you really have to ask. So I did. Then I think someone was very nice. I remember this girl called Margaret Palmer. She was the resident who went over all these histories and told me what all these abbreviations stood for. The nurses were also very helpful. When the nurses saw that you were floundering, you didn't know what to do. She said, "You know, Dr. So-and-So always orders these tests." "Oh, yes, yes, that's what needs to be done." They were kind and helpful. Finally, you had to present clinics. Every Saturday morning one case was pulled up. I used to be terrified that someone would think I didn't know, and I knew everything.

RJ: Were you conscious of big contrasts between Pakistan and South Asia and medicine in—

NS: Well, absolutely, because the type of medicine—it was very, very stark the contrast in the running of the chronic diseases hospital. Once every so many weeks you had duty of

covering the chronic diseases hospital. I remember the first time I was on duty there. Several people who had been there for many, many years, who had no chance of recovery collapsed. When I went to see them, I said, "There is nothing to be done." The nurse was so shocked. She said, "What do you mean? Aren't you going to inject them with this?" I said, "But for what? They are going to die." "Oh! Life is of much higher value here," said this chief who was quite mean, implying "than where you come from."

I wanted to say to her, but I didn't have the guts, "I wouldn't like life like that—a man with this big head who is just dying there for so many years, or someone with very extreme metastasis of cancer, just lying there. We are doing all these heroic measures to save his life—blood transfusions, adrenaline shots into the heart—heroic measures to save someone who is going to die the next day, and just putting them through so much suffering torture."

It was a contrast. On the other hand, they also saved a lot more lives than we did in our countries with the type of interventions in obstetrics, certainly, but also in medicine where I was doing the first internship. The style of medicine there was not to observe so much. In our clinical work, you did a lot more observation and putting together all the symptoms. History taking was quite a big part of our teaching. So you put the history and the symptoms together to form a pattern. While in the U.S., a lot of diagnosis was based on technology.

I think in both you could miss some. So if you had a combination of both, it would have been the best medicine in my view. I think in England there is that combination. I visited England and I spent a few weeks working somewhere. They don't do such a battery of tests immediately. They do spend some more time on the history taking.

RJ: But surely the testing has grown even more so in the past fifty years.

NS: Probably even more now, but even in the 1950s, in contrast to Pakistan, it was a lot. They did all the blood tests when in fact you didn't require it. They did electrolyte tests every day, which you don't really require. Some of it, I was told, was because of the litigation. They want to be sure that everything is covered, you see. X-rays were taken all the time. If a patient moved from one discipline to another, sometimes the new discipline where they had to have something done would repeat a test, I think quite unnecessarily. So that kind of thing was very prevalent here. On the other hand, they are very much more advanced. The clinics and analysis of cases that didn't go well was very thorough.

Especially in obstetrics—the obstetrics analysis was exceptional. If they had a maternal mortality it was a calamity. It was talked about and discussed and analyzed forever, until they really found out what was it that did it. You know, that was quite impressive—I mean, the amount of time they spent. And at that time, neonatal work was just starting, so they had started to do a lot more in neonatal work, preserving the life of the newborn infant. And pediatrics in the obstetrical room was just being introduced—the pediatric care. It wasn't there always. First, it was like a pediatrician was on call. But then every time there was something abnormal in the pregnancy, the pediatrician was not on call but was there.

These things were done, and everything was available for the infant. These were big contrasts. But the biggest thing in obstetrics, when I went into obstetrics, I never asked a woman whether she was married. In Pakistan, in the 1950s, no one came there and said she wasn't married if she was having a baby.

RJ: In Baltimore you did ask was she married.

NS: But I didn't ask to start with. I didn't know. My first case, a woman who had to have a cesarean, was an eye-opener. The doctor in charge coached us that "married" was ticked off. So they were looking for the husband, ringing up to—

RJ: To get husband consent.

NS: Consent, yes, or to inform husband. And they found that she didn't have a husband. The chief of service was so angry with me. I said, "In my country, nobody asks." His response was, "Don't you know how women get pregnant not through marriage?"

RJ: How interesting. Now, were you following any of the political developments in Pakistan—your father coming back and talking about the World Bank? Was any of this entering into your consciousness at the time?

NS: The World Bank at that time was not so big in the 1950s. I was there from 1952 to 1954. I mean, I was there. My father was there for much longer. I remember in 1952 there was a ball and the whole of the Bank fitted into one room in the Mayflower Hotel.

RJ: A ballroom.

NS: Yes. We went to the dance. We had pictures from the dance. [Dwight] Eisenhower came to it. I got married in Washington in 1954. [Richard] Nixon came to our wedding. I have a picture, somewhere. I don't know where it is, but Nixon was at the wedding. He was the vice president. Washington altogether was much smaller and the World Bank was much smaller.

RJ: It came on the strength of your father being well senior.

NS: Executive director. He went back. You see, in Pakistan there was the coup in 1958, remember, when first Iskander Mirza took over. Then he was ousted and Ayub Khan took over. But my father was asked by Iskander Mirza—remember Iskander Mirza was our neighbor. He was the secretary of defense when my father was there. His children and we were very, very

friendly and close. He was asked by Iskander Mirza to come as finance minister. My mother and he were there on holiday in Pakistan when he was asked, and he accepted.

Then they went on to India to visit my mother's and my father's relatives in India. My brother was posted at this time in Rangoon, in Burma—to visit him. While they were there, they heard that Ayub Khan had taken over and Iskander Mirza was no longer the president. But then Ayub Khan offered my father the finance ministership. My father wasn't sure whether he should take it, so my parents came back to the States via the West Coast. My husband and I were, in fact, at this time in Canada, because my husband had been selected for the Canadian staff college in Kingston, Ontario. My mother asked me to come to Washington. She said, "You must come down. We must discuss whether your father should accept this post with the army, which he had already accepted with Iskander Mirza.

Anyway, I drove down all night with my housekeeper to go and be with them. And you know, my mother died in those three days that I was there. She just got a hemorrhage and died. It was like I was supposed to be there with her. But anyway, we did discuss this a little bit. I wasn't really that much informed. I think my mother was very keen to go back to Pakistan. Of course she never did go back. She just died before that. But my father did decide to accept, to do something for Pakistan. So he went back like three months later.

RJ: How long was he minister for?

NS: He was minister from 1959 to 1966, I think. He left because of the 1965 war. He was totally opposed to it. And once they decided to go to war with India, I think he almost wept. He said, "We have put the country back twenty-five years. It will take us even longer, maybe, to recover." He was most opposed to this army expenditure and all that. He said now it would mean an increase in defense expenditure and less on development.

He left in 1966. Then Mohammed Ali Bogua became prime minister later, and he begged of him to come back. So my father came back for a year. Then he went back to the World Bank as vice president, first with George Wood and then [Robert] McNamara. McNamara was extremely fond of my father. And my father became vice president, where there were only two vice presidents—Burke Knapp and himself. He set up this whole evaluation and administration and system in the Bank. The evaluation would report to the board, so it would be totally independent of the organization. And it is still like that to this day.

RJ: Let's have a little pause.

RJ: We were talking of you leaving Washington and going back to Pakistan as a young medical doctor in the armed forces.

NS: Well, we got married in Washington and I came back to Pakistan. My husband was in the army, so I decided that I would get a job with the army, but in an army hospital, since they were the best hospitals—but not as a military person, because then I would have to be posted wherever they posted me, but as a civilian. It was always temporary. I didn't have any permanence in the job, and I could leave whenever I wanted. And I could get myself transferred whenever my husband got transferred. So in a sense, I was quite independent. But it was still like my husband's career was more important than mine at that time.

RJ: Did you resent having to make that choice?

NS: No, I just did it. It's that I wanted to work. That was my own sole desire. It wasn't like I should do private practice, or I should have a certain type of job. It was just that I wanted to work and practice what I had learned. So I was not resentful at all. I was very happy to have that kind of—

RJ: But it was in some sense slightly less of a personal career than working alongside your husband.

NS: Also, I chose to get a job where in fact I could leave if my husband's career took him somewhere else. That I had obviously acknowledged. But I wasn't resentful. It didn't occur to me, to be very honest. And I didn't want to set up a practice. I could have done that in Pakistan. I didn't want to set up a practice because somehow moneymaking was never in my consciousness. I wanted money, but not to make money. In 1954, I was quite young, and I looked much younger than I was. Everyone who looked at me—I was now the second person in the hospital. We had an Eastern European colonel who was in charge of the obstetrical and women's and children's ward in the army. But anyway, I practiced in Rawal Pindi at the CMH (Combined Military Hospital). Then, I was posted to Abbottabad with my husband. I resigned from the post in Rasalfindi and got a civilian post in the next place. It was not so difficult to get the civilian post. It was not absolutely easy, but it was less difficult.

Abbotabad was a small town. The Pakistan military academy was located there. I used to ride with all the cadets, because I used to ride a lot at that time.

RJ: Ride horses.

NS: Ride horses, yes. When I got a call I used to ride my horse into the premises and get off my horse, and someone would come and tie it up. I enjoyed myself thoroughly. You know, women didn't drive in Abbottabad in those days, but I drove my own car. The first day I went shopping in this narrow street in Abbottabad, and all the shopkeepers came out to look. I felt quite embarrassed. But gradually they discovered that I was a doctor, you see. So then they said, "We want to send so-and-so." The shopkeeper would tell me, "Could you see the person?" Well, I'm supposed to be working in the army, but "OK, send them along at so-and-so time."

So I became like the shopkeepers' family doctor for free, because I did not charge them. It was a wonderful time in my life in Abbottabad, in this small town. When I drove in, everyone used to say, "Doctor is here, Doctor is here. Any problem?" So I spent two or three years of my life there.

Then my husband was selected for college in Canada through an examination, so I went to Canada with him. I applied to Queens University for a job at the Kingston General Hospital. I went to interview in February at the Kingston General Hospital—

RJ: February of which year?

NS: Of 1958. They asked where I had heard of Queens University from. I said, "When I came to Kingston." They said, "Oh, why should you have heard? We have only been here a hundred years." They were very irritated. I thought, "I am surely not going to get this job." I hadn't bothered to find out about Queens University. Anyway, I did get the job. That was like for two or three months.

Then I got a research fellowship in physiology at the university, which was not what I wanted to do. But I thought, "Since I am here, I might as well do something." So I taught students physiology and did some research on dogs, which I hated. But it was like a whole different experience. That research was actually written up by the professor, a Professor Thatcher. He is quite a well-known physiologist. So that is what I did for the year that we were in Kingston. I enjoyed my year in Kingston very much, except that my mother died in Washington in that same year, at the end of 1958.

Then, in 1959, we went back to Pakistan. As I went back a bit early, I spent a few months packing up my father's house for him when he was going back to join the government. Then I stayed in Karachi actually for some time with my father, because my mother had died,

and I was like playing hostess for him. My husband was posted in Rawal Pindi, but then he got himself transferred to Karachi. I joined the naval hospital in Karachi, as a civilian again. The advantage of being a civilian was that you could apply for a job, and if there was a place that was needed then you could get the job. So I started practicing in Karachi.

Now, Karachi was my hometown. I had all my friends there who didn't work. They were all married and went to parties and went to coffee parties and dinners. I started to feel, "My God, all the time I am working. Even from dinners I am rushing off because someone has called me, even though I am not supposed to be on call all the time." You know, there was a rotation, but every time anyone called who I had looked after during outpatient—

RJ: They wanted you.

NS: They wanted me personally. Then I felt like I had to go. In the end, I seemed to be doing duty every day. And you know, it was the same army hospital and the same poor people. There was a tuberculosis ward for women in this hospital, and many of them, their tuberculosis had become very active after a delivery. I used to say, "You can't get pregnant." It was the same story again. And again, I did the same thing—called the husbands in and all that. I started to think to myself, "All my life I am not going to do this, tell people what should be done and not really making a difference."

Then you would see friends of mine with the coffee parties and the bridge and all that. I said, "I am not going to work anymore. I have decided enough is enough. And I hate this job. I don't like obstetrics. Why I ever went into it, I don't know. I enjoy doing it, but it is just repetitive and I feel frustrated." So he was quite wise. He said, "Well, why don't you take a two month holiday and see how you like it?"

Of course, after two weeks of it everyone in the house was fed up with me—all the servants. I didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't know what to do in the house. I was just used to getting dressed and leaving. And how many coffee parties can you attend, with the bridge and all that?

Then I decided that I would look for another job where I could make a difference. The Planning Commission I saw was advertising. In fact, my father was quite shocked that I decided to stop working. I don't know that he said anything to me. But when the Planning Commission was advertising a chief of health section, I thought that I was qualified. But I didn't have a public health background as such. So I asked USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) if they would send me on a fellowship to do health planning, because I was getting a job as—which I wasn't, but I had applied for it.

They gave me this fellowship, so I did this health planning course at Johns Hopkins University, which had just started. I was the only one that was going to be in planning. I didn't know that much about planning, but I had read up as many books, and a lot of public health books, just to prepare myself for public health, which was not something I knew. But you know, a lot of it was to me just common sense. Whatever is said in public health is common sense. It is what you should be doing before you decide only to treat people. So I felt very at home in public health, actually. Johns Hopkins had Paul Samuelson as an economics teacher on the macroeconomics of health.

RJ: He came down from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)?

NS: He used to come to lecture to us. Irene Tauber had brought him down. I can't remember the name of the dean. Carl Taylor was there, and Tim Baker was there at that time. You know, when I applied for this course, they thought I was some old lady coming. They got

me a room in the nurses' quarters. They said, "Don't mind the young nurses. They will disturb you." Anyway, when I arrived, Tim Baker took me aside and he said, "Are you sure you're the person?" I said, "Yes, I am."

RJ: How interesting.

NS: It was quite interesting. But I remember saying to Paul Samuelson, "Why should we have to justify in money terms health? Health is a need." We had this conversation—I mean dialogue—in the class. He said, "Well, it makes more sense for economists to understand that it contributes financially. Then they will allocate resources. Otherwise, they won't." I said, "Well, that's very wrong in my opinion." Still, I didn't have all these formed ideas. But these ideas started for form gradually. Anyway, I joined the Planning Commission.

RJ: So you are now leaving Baltimore—after a year was this?

NS: How long was that course? Four months? Five months? Maybe it was a four month course, something like that.

RJ: Before we leave that, any other impressions? Carl Taylor's long commitments? He's a very different sort of man from Paul Samuelson.

NS: Very different. One of my recollections is Irene Tauber, who came to give lectures on demography. She said, "You must join the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP). You are very bright, and you are this and that and the other." We talked about population and how important this was in Pakistan. We didn't have a family planning program at that time, because this was still 1963. I said, "Oh, I would love to join whatever it was we could join." She suggested my name, and they didn't want to take me in because I was not a scientific scholar in population. So she said she would resign if they did not take me. And

I was admitted to the IUSSP. That was such a long time ago. I think I also joined the SID (Society for International Development), which was starting up at that time.

RJ: A little early. SID was 1959, as I recall.

NS: But it was not so old, because someone came to give us a lecture from SID. It was like a side lecture at the university on development. This was the first time I heard about development as such, except that I knew in Pakistan we had development—

RJ: You don't remember—it wasn't—

NS: I don't remember who the lecturer was. Someone came to—

RJ: Not Andy Rice?

NS: It could have been Andy, actually. It may have been, but I don't recall who it was. But I do remember going to the lecture and thinking how interesting this was. But you know, these were just like recollections. This was part of university.

RJ: Now what about the UN at the time? Did you have any links with the UN?

NS: Not much, except that my father was in the World Bank and he used to keep having meetings with the UN and all that, but not too much. We knew that the Pakistani ambassador to the UN was Ali Khan, who was a great friend of my father's. So we used to come and spend some days in New York in his apartment—trying to look at his personal things, which we never got to. But otherwise, not much about the politics of the UN. Or whatever was happening in the UN was of not much concern.

But in Pakistan, in the Planning Commission—you know, the international field I got to know when I joined the Planning Commission. We had the Harvard school of whatever it was, with what was his name—

RJ: Gus Papanek.

NS: And Richard something or the other—all these people. Mahbub [ul Haq] was not yet in the Planning Commission. He was just joining, or going to join us as—

RJ: From Yale.

NS: From Yale, as the chief economist. You know, Shahida's husband was with me—Khalid Ikram and her brother, Javed Asfar.

RJ: What about Sartaj [Aziz]?

NS: Sartaj was there very much. The chairman of the Planning Commission was Mr. Saeed Hassan at that time. Then Mahbub joined very soon after, as chief economist. We prepared the third five-year development plan. My first encounter with the international community was when I was trying to get data on health in Pakistan. There was no data. The Ministry of Health had really bad information. Someone said, "World Health will tell you everything." So I went to see the World Health Organization (WHO).

RJ: Not in Geneva.

NS: No, in Pakistan. And the World Health talked absolutely rubbish. They didn't have anything. They said they had this research and that research. I said, "But this research and that research is not of interest to me. Maybe later, but at this moment I just want to know some basic facts. What do you have on Pakistan that I don't have? You could collect information from here or there, about this, about that. Do you have data on regions?" "No." "Do you have data on East Pakistan?" "No." I said, "But how do you then decide on what aid you give?" "Oh, we discuss with the governments." I said, "Can I come and sit in on a meeting?" "OK, you can come and sit in on a meeting."

So I came and sat in on a meeting. They were sitting across the table—WHO on one side, and the government of Pakistan on the other side. "We have $3 million, or $2 million, or

$4 million for the next two years." So the secretary, or someone, says to the representative, "Don't forget, my son has to go to university soon." So he said, "Ah yes, one fellowship." I am not joking. That was one of the first things.

So then, "We should have a meeting in so-and-so place." "On what?" "OK, this subject." I don't remember the subject, but that's how the whole plan for WHO assistance for Pakistan was done. So you see, the WHO rep said we do it in consultation with the governments. I think they thought I looked so young, so whatever they say to me I would just believe and accept as the best way to do it. So when I came out, I said, "That is hardly a plan for Pakistan." "Oh, but we have this rural health center." "But that was not very much discussed. You didn't discuss whether it was working or not working or how many centers." "Well, the plan is—," he rattled off some figures. So many centers should be built by the year so-and-so. "But how many have been built? Have you see them?" "No, we haven't seen them." "Are they functioning?" "I don't know." "How many people are there? What was the staff strength?" The usual things—"How many people come to the center? Do they have supplies? For how long do the supplies last?"

They thought I was just asking so many questions. I said, "To make a plan, you must have all this." In the Planning Commission, whoever was before me apparently had been ill. So there was there no file with data and information. There was a project file, but then no file on what actually was delivered by the program.

The biggest program was the malaria eradication program, which took up, I think, more than 50 or 60 percent of the health development budget. Then the next big program was the rural health center program, which was sort of an idealistic program. Then medical education, and this, that, and the other. Anyway, my planning experience was quite interesting in that our

planning was done on the basis of very little information. I made up all kinds of statistics, which I constructed in some way to reflect infant mortality from general mortality, and what percentage were women, and what percentage were this. Then I got some hospital data. I don't remember now exactly how I did it, but I got a statistician to help me. We constructed some data which I think is still being used as a basis. I think it wasn't that far off, but it was really bad that we didn't even try to collect the basic data.

Anyway, in the Planning Commission, the health allocation was not going to be increased by very much. The whole plan was big grandiose statements—the objective of the third five-year plan is to raise the level of living of every individual in the country, and blah, blah, blah. The whole first paragraph was like this. And I was fighting to get more money for health. Finally, I wrote a memo to the chief economist, Mahbub, and I said, "Please remove this paragraph from the plan because this is not what is going to happen as far as health is concerned. The health indicators are all going to go downwards because of—." I made quite a good, rational argument which was correct. If you don't have money, you can't run centers. So you can say, "I have expanded the centers," but fewer people will have access to medicines and whatnot.

"So in fact, everything, all the indicators will go down. So if that is your objective—to improve living conditions—you can add, 'Except for in the case of health. We are unable to improve the conditions of life of the people.'" To give Mahbub credit, he was shocked. And I think he was more shocked at the fact that I was so determined that this was what I was going to present to the Harvard group also. He said, "Oh, well, health will be raised by so much percentage." So it was raised. When we had to make presentations to justify these raises, I was quite irritated by this—to the Harvard group, as justification.

RJ: You were quite irritated at the—

NS: The fact of having to justify it to a—

RJ: To a foreign group.

NS: To any group. The fact that health needed money was self-evident. Our population increased, the numbers increased, so you had to have more money to even maintain the same level. And we are talking about improving the level. So if you want to improve—in fact, I said we had to increase by three and fourfold because capital costs a lot more. Then the recurring budget has to be also provided somewhere. It was my job now to convince the provincial budgets that their recurring budgets had to increase. If they said they didn't have the money, then either you provide it from the development budget for a couple of years, or you couldn't do it.

So there was no point in building—which was what was done in East Pakistan, a lot of centers that had no money to run. In fact, I wrote a note once saying, "These health centers in East Pakistan are just a waste of money." The East Pakistan government was very irritated with me. I said, "You shouldn't be irritated. It is better to take this development money and to put it into existing centers. I am not saying you shouldn't have the money." It was very sensitive, East and West Pakistan. "You should have the money, but not to build a medical school which is going to be only 60 percent equipped."

So these were all the arguments I used. Mahbub was, in fact, very good. I became quite a good planner and a good advocate for health. I got a lot of information. By the way, when I was doing medicine, my father said, "You must do economics because economics will run everything,"—in his view at the time—"So you must understand economics. So why don't you take a concomitant degree, a B.A. in economics?" I said, "OK," but I didn't do a degree. But I

studied economics for like six months, thinking I would do a degree. But I never did the degree. But you know, that economic background of six months even was quite helpful to me in the Planning Commission just to understand the jargon.

RJ: Now those were the days when, at least by Mahbub's interpretation, economic growth—

NS: Economic growth was very high.

RJ: Pakistan did very well, although Mahbub himself attacked it subsequently for paying too much attention to growth and not enough attention to the social sector or to people of the grassroots.

NS: Well, the twenty-two families came later. But there was a lot of attention to growth. The whole thinking at that time was economic growth would trickle down. You must first earn income to support health and education, which were the consuming sectors. In fact, to be very honest, in the Planning Commission there was a bias against education.

I remember a discussion with the social members and secretary of the Planning Commission. I don't think Mahbub was in this discussion. But I was saying—from my own background—"We must educate all the boys, and we must get all the girls into school as well." They said, "Oh, but this is going to cost a lot of money. Besides, then all these girls will start demanding their rights. And all these poor people will start demanding their rights." I said, "That's the whole idea, that people should know their rights." "We shouldn't spend so much money on education." So there were a lot of people who were actively against girls' education.

RJ: Were they actively against health too?

NS: No, health was something that politicians recognized as important. But it was only that health consumed money. So you should build a center because the politician would get credit. But if it runs properly or not, then somehow the government somewhere is at fault.

RJ: But you did need to provide money. It was seen in the sense that you were saying, more as consumption than strictly as investment.

NS: Correct.

RJ: What about family planning?

NS: In this third five-year plan, the government decided—

RJ: Which were the years, do you remember?

NS: That was 1965 to 1970. That was the period of the plan, but we were working on it earlier. The Family Planning Association had already started doing some work, and my father, the finance minister, was very much of the view that the population numbers—something had to be done. Ayub Khan then became very convinced. My father gave many speeches. The Pop Council (Population Council) came to Pakistan, and he was in fact the chief speaker at that first big seminar. He said something like, "You must cut your coat according to your cloth."

So Ayub got convinced that there should be family planning. There were discussions on how the population problem could be addressed. It was decided that family planning was the means to address it, to reduce fertility. So we were charged to develop a five-year program for family planning as part of the health sector program. There was a civil servant called Envir Adil. He was appointed family Planning Commissioner of a semi-autonomous organization called the Pakistan Family Planning Council. The plan would start from 1965, but the preparation should be done so that would be ready to go when the third five-year plan started.

So I had quite a lot of involvement with that. Before that, already, Hopkins had two projects, one in Lahore, the Swedish project which was on communications and behavior change; and the Hopkins project, which was in Karachi and Hyderabad, on how to get services. Then the Family Planning Association already also had some activities.

RJ: You were located, at this time, in Islamabad?

NS: In Karachi, to start with. We went to Islamabad later.

RJ: But the Planning Commission—

NS: The Planning Commission was in Karachi. The government hadn't fully moved to Islamabad. So these projects were the basis of the family planning program.

RJ: Now I read that India developed its family planning program in 1951, I think.

NS: 1955. They did it earlier. Their program precedes ours by a few years. I'm not sure that they did it in 1955 as the official program, but the Family Planning Association started work in India before it started in Pakistan.

RJ: Did you consciously try to learn from their experience?

NS: Of the Family Planning Association?

RJ: Yes.

NS: Oh yes. I visited the Family Planning Association. I visited the Family Planning Association for my own family planning needs, by the way, first. Then I visited them and learned from them what they had done to implement the family planning program as part of the planning process for the first family planning plan for Pakistan.

RJ: But the UN itself was very sensitive at this stage.

NS: The UN was not involved at all because WHO was not in it at all. In 1965, the FP Council asked me to join the Pakistan FP Program, since I had had a lot to do with the

development of the Family Planning Program. By the way, before that, UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) invited me many times to come to—Charles Eggar came to see me many times, and said would I come to a UNICEF board meeting—I think in the Sudan first, where they wanted to discuss their involvement in family planning—and that I would make this fantastic case. But how to get me there, because I could not be the government representative? They would then invite me as an expert, and so on. Finally, we decided—I don't know how, but I did not go to Sudan. Whether it was them or the government, I am not sure.

Then UNICEF invited me to a huge meeting in Bangkok. Again, Charles Eggar—and [Henry] Labouisse was the executive-director. And Newton Bowles, I think, was there. They invited me to a huge meeting in Bangkok on planning for children—children and planning, or something. It was a huge meeting.

RJ: In the 1960s?

NS: In the 1960s, yes. I think it was in 1965, in Bangkok. Maybe it was a regional meeting, or it was a global meeting. I'm not sure. I think that was the first time I met Mercedes Concepcion. In fact, I, by this time, had gotten convinced about the importance of women's and mother's health and family planning, you see, having worked a lot on the Family Planning Program and looked at whatever data there was on family planning. It started as for the rights of women to control their fertility, and how women die because they have so many children. So now, by this time, for me the connection between mothers' health, women's control, and family planning was very important.

So when Charles was trying to get UNICEF to be more involved in family planning, he invited me to this meeting. I came as a member of the Pakistan delegation. I think I didn't stop

talking about family planning or mothers' health or whatever—that you can't start with the child, you must start with the mother if you want a healthy child.

By the way, I found a fantastic analogy the other day. I did this in the Save the Children Fund. This is an aside. You know on a plane, when you are sitting there and they tell you that if the pressure drops, the oxygen masks will all fall down?

RJ: Fix your own mask first.

NS: Before you put it on the children. I was doing something for Save the Children—every mother, every child. I was thinking of what I would say, and I started with this. I said, "Think about it for a moment." Then I made all the connections. But the only thing they remember is this analogy. "You have to think about the mother first." Isn't that a good analogy?

RJ: It's a very good analogy, yes.

NS: So this huge UNICEF meeting was again to try to get UNICEF involved in family planning. This was in 1965. I think then they did. At that time, no international organization, except for the Swedes, was giving assistance for family planning.

RJ: WHO was still—

NS: WHO was way behind. I became director of planning and training in the family planning program in 1965.

RJ: Now, the notes here say, the Central Family Planning—

NS: Central Family Planning Council. I became director of family planning in the Family Planning Council. As I said, it was a semi-autonomous organization, so it was not called the Family Planning Department. It was given this title to be separate from the government.

RJ: Was it political sensitivities?

NS: No. It was to give it more independence in action so they could hire more people and didn't have to go through the rules and regulations, and so on, of the civil service commissions and things like that. It was not for any other reason, because it was called family planning. It was just to give it more autonomy.

So I joined the Family Planning Council as the director of planning and training. As planning, part of the thing was to deal with foreign aid. I wrote to the U.S. and to the Canadians and others. These letters must be on file. The Americans came back and said they didn't support family planning. But there was a health advisor in Islamabad called Bill Boynton, who had become quite friendly with me. So he gave us quite a lot of money from the PL-480 funds, the domestic resources. The Canadians replied after a few months and said, "While your request is being considered very, very seriously in all our departments, we find that this is a subject which at the moment we are unable to support. Maybe at some later date we will come back to you."

So the people who provided assistance were the Swedes, the Danes, and USAID from the—

RJ: The PL-480 funds.

NS: Yes. But all the others were very reluctant to do anything.

RJ: The UK (United Kingdom)?

NS: Not at that time, no. The UK came a little bit later. They provided us with some contraceptives that could be bought in the UK. I don't remember now what. I think Johnson and Johnson, or something like that.

RJ: Or Durex.

NS: Yes. Some condoms and things like that. The Japanese provided condoms. In fact, the Swedes bought the condoms in Japan. That is how the Japanese then became, later, interested in providing us with pills.

RJ: Because the pill was well under way.

NS: The oral pills were just starting. And IUDs (intra-uterine device) were just starting.

RJ: The pill—1961 or 1962.

NS: But we also introduced the pill like in 1965. But we made some huge mistakes, in that everyone decided in India and Pakistan, including Pop Council and all our advisors, that the IUD was the answer. Because it required one intervention and after that women didn't have to do anything. You just inserted it and that was it. So we did a lot of—IUDs were somehow a big focus of the program both in Pakistan and in India. Oral contraceptives were just being introduced. They were still like pilot programs.

Condoms were there. And of course there was sterilization, which was not that popular in Pakistan. But still, there were a number of cases. But the IUDs, in the first round of evaluations that we did, had so many side effects. In countries like ours, where in fact the health system was not efficient, we had a lot of problem with the health system. They would not look after the complications of IUDs. If women had bleeding, then they would say, "Go back to the place where you got this inserted. Don't bother us." The women used to get so upset and angry. There were so many angry users then, who felt there was no follow-up system.

That's when Enver Adil decided, "To hell with the health ministry. We will set up our own parallel structure," which was a very bad decision. In fact, he should have gone to the cabinet and the minister. But he decided that these health ministry people were useless. We would never have a successful program unless we had our own parallel health system. So then

he started to start up health service centers, followed with training centers—a whole parallel structure which was really quite a bad decision.

RJ: In retrospect, were there any other mistakes made, in your view, in the Pakistan program?

NS: I think this was the major mistake. There was not a good, complete involvement of the providers at the local level. And there was a view that if you just instructed women to use the IUD, that was the answer. You didn't have to do anything else. You didn't have to bother again. There was also a lack of sensitivity to peoples' needs. That had a huge, huge setback.

RJ: Later.

NS: Later, yes. I think we did many good things. We involved many religious leaders in the programs, and they were quite an asset to start with. But we bribed a lot of them in the sense that you paid them to give speeches in the mosques, and all that. Then gradually, when the subsidies were reduced, then they started to become anti the program. Local midwives were not included as part of the advocacy, or whatever.

RJ: And the TBAs (traditional birth attendants).

NS: And the TBAs. So they became very anti the program. So I think we didn't think of who should be our partners, and how we should involve those that might be opposed to the program, and who were influential in the community. Although, you know, a lot of attention was paid to getting opinion leaders. But I think there was this very colonialist attitude—a paternalistic, top-down attitude that you only spoke to the chiefs or tops, but you didn't think about the lower-level persons who in fact had much more influence on opinion.

I think these were huge mistakes made in both India and the Pakistan programs. Then much gossip started, like, "You'll become sterile," and that the government was doing this and that, and trying to get all our people sterilized.

RJ: Were there any other countries, apart from India, that were models that you could learn from?

NS: No. In fact, at that time we were considered a model. I remember getting so many delegations from Egypt, from Tunisia, from Indonesia, from Malaysia. We used to organize many training programs. We were in great demand, internationally, to come and tell everyone. In Indonesia, I got an award. I was, in fact, asked to go to Indonesia to help them set up the program, including this involvement of religious leaders and so on. Having learned a little bit from the Pakistan program, I recommended that you should have all the local people who have any influence to be part of that planning or policy group. That's what they did in their program.

RJ: In the Paykaykar.

NS: Which is what they gave me an award for, for helping them to organize their programs so well, which we didn't do in our own program as well. It becomes also like a power thing between the top people in your program and the health ministry and other ministries and so on. In fact, the people learned all the good lessons from our program which we didn't implement ourselves, very well—in Tunisia and Indonesia.

RJ: And was Johns Hopkins and the Pop Council coming to learn from Pakistan?

NS: Hopkins had a person there always, and they gave us a lot of fellowship and help, and so on. I think it was 1967—this was like two years midway in our program. I suggested to the commissioner that we should have an independent evaluation of the program. So he said,

"OK, fine. Who should do it?" I said, "Well, let's get the UN to do it because that will be seen as independent and coming from the outside."

I was convinced that we had a very good program. It was a very good program in that we reported all these things that were wrong. We were trying to address these wrongs. Maybe we didn't do it as well, but we weren't hiding anything.

RJ: You were open and pioneering.

NS: We were open and pioneering, yes. So I said, "We have this wonderful program. And people here don't believe us when we say the contraceptive rate has gone up. When the people from the outside, when they come and say that our program is well-conceived, then they will believe us." So he said, "OK, go ahead." So I didn't know who to ask at that point, but I had gotten to know some people from that meeting that I had gone to in ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) at the UNICEF meeting. So I wrote to Carl Frieson, the director of the population division in ESCAP, that we wanted an evaluation done of the Pakistan family planning program.

And I wrote to the Pop Council. The vice president was Parker Mauldin. I said I wanted some help from them on terms of reference on posing all the questions that should be posed by this independent evaluation, and what kinds of questions we needed answered. He made a good suggestion of all that, and the questions that they should ask, and what kinds of materials. Anyway, the UN—I don't know how the UN mechanism works, but at that time they set up this huge UN evaluation team, headed by Sir Ronald Walker from Australia. Now, who Sir Ronald Walker was, I hadn't a clue. But these names were sent. WHO and UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and blah, blah, blah would all be members. I didn't even

know all these organizations. I mean, I knew who they were, but why they should be members I wasn't quite sure.

We had a family planning education in the formal sector. We had one in the informal sector. We had one in the organized sector. Those programs we had ourselves, with our labor unions, with our agricultural colleges—things that they hadn't done before, but we had them in the program. So they said, "Oh, agriculture sector—FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)." So anyway, this team came and spent three months here.

RJ: In the late 1960s.

NS: In 1967 or 1968, something like that. I can't remember exactly. They spent maybe two months doing the evaluation. They went everywhere. Then two months passed—no report. Three months, four months—anyway, four months later came a draft. I read the draft and made some comments. There were some factual errors. In general, the report was very good. They made some recommendations. One of the recommendations was that eventually the program should be an integrated program in the health ministry. But at this moment, we were right to have done what we did because there was a great deal of resistance in the health ministry, they had found, to the family planning program. If we waited for the health ministry—this was our finding as well.

In retrospect, I don't agree. But at that time, this was our view. So I didn't even think very much about it. But whatever the factual errors, we corrected that and sent it back. I didn't make any changes. In fact, was suggesting, "You tell them that, and you tell them this." I said, "No, forget it. We can't tell them anything." Anyway, this went back. Another month passed, and another passed. Then finally I was sent because I had suggested this stupid UN evaluation.

Now people in Pakistan were saying the UN had said terrible things about our program and we were hiding the report.

I was sent to the UN, so I went to see the UN here. Who was it here? I don't remember. So I said, "Where is the report? This evaluation is at our request. You have nothing to do with the program. You don't help us with the program. It's our report. I want to know what has happened to it. I just want it released and to take it back."

So finally, Carl Freisen felt bad. He said, "You know, if I tell you something you can't use it. The WHO objects to the report." I said, "But they had a person—how could they object to the report?" "Oh, they want their expert to change this recommendation to say that the program must be part of health and health only." I was quite shocked. I said, "But they can't make an expert change his view." That was the reason for the holdup.

RJ: And now, with your experience of the UN, you are not surprised.

NS: I am not surprised, but at that time I was shocked. I was so upset, I can't tell you. So I said, "What shall I do? Shall I go to our ambassador and tell him?" You know, I was pretty young. I wasn't that old, so to argue with these, what I considered old men—

RJ: Sir Bumply–Bumps.

NS: Yes. I also was very upset at the lack of principle—I mean, of integrity. I felt very betrayed. I thought here was this UN. This wonderful organization would come and do an evaluation, and then we will follow all their recommendations.

RJ: It was just this one issue.

NS: This one issue.

RJ: That is what is disillusioning. I was listening and thinking the moral was that the whole family planning set of issues was still so difficult for the UN.

NS: No, this was not an issue of family planning. This should be part of health, and how did we set up a separate structure? This was Alex Kesilerin in WHO who held it up. He was in charge of the human reproduction program. In fact, then I went to see Dr. Zara. Zara said, "I agree." He was so soft-spoken. Anyway, finally this report did come out with that recommendation, because the WHO expert was someone from the West Indies, whose name I have forgotten. He didn't care about WHO and what they said.

RJ: And in the end, they left his recommendations.

NS: Yes. And WHO was very irritated. So later, in 1971, when I was being hired by [Rafal] Salas in UNFPA (UN Population Fund). Who was the one before Mahler? The Brazilian, Candeau. Apparently, he wrote a letter to Salas to say that no doctor could be hired in any organization of the UN except in WHO. So how were UFPA hiring a physician?

RJ: I have a very similar experience.

NS: This is in my personnel folder, the letter. Can you imagine?

RJ: I can, only too easily.

NS: Because I had then a run-in with WHO. Before I ever joined the UN, I went to a conference that was called by Milos Matsura. I don't remember the title of the conference. This was in 1968, or something. It was fertility and family planning or something or the other. Again, there was this huge thing where WHO wanted to change the recommendations of the participants on how family planning should be just this and just that, and I don't know what. Our view was that family planning was not for sick people, so therefore it should be in health—yes, for certain. But it should also be outside of health in terms of public information and access to methods and so on. Especially those methods that are not clinical methods don't have to be in a

clinic only. They should be available anywhere. So people should know about them and be able to get them wherever they want—not just from clinics.

WHO was still against family planning. In Candeau's time, they were still opposed, apparently, to family planning because he was Catholic, or whatever it was. I didn't know anything about this UN business, but this was my experience with the UN.

Next my experience with the UN was I got a visit from somebody called Hemmerisch from the UN. He came to visit Pakistan, then asked to see me as the director of planning. It was that the UN was now engaged in—or maybe by this time I had become something higher—was now interested in supporting programs in family planning. He had come to inquire what the UN could do in Pakistan. So we spent like two hours going over our program and whatnot. Then at the end, I said, "And how much money have you got?" He said, "At the moment, I have no money. But this is for the future." I said, "You wasted two hours of my time. At the moment you have no money." He was just appointed as some sort of field advisor when the UN was going to get a fund. The UNFPA had not yet been set up.

But the UN Population Division had set up six advisors around the world, and he was one of them. I said, "Until you have money, there is no point in coming to waste our time." Then the UNFPA was set up, and finally they did have money. I met Salas at some conference—in the OECD (Organisation for Co-Operation and Development), I think. They were looking for programs now, because there were not many programs. I think Egypt was the first program they financed, and Pakistan was the second one. Mr. Halver Gille was the deputy-executive-director. He came to visit Pakistan with Roushdi el Heneid. Roushdi was the desk officer. So they both came to Pakistan to negotiate the Pakistan program with us in 1969.

We negotiated the program, and then we had a memorandum of agreement and assistance for the following areas. I noticed that Halver kept adding words like education, or labor, and agriculture. I didn't understand why. It was only later that I understood. But anyway, our programs were in the trade unions, so we wanted "Population and Education in the Organized Sector" as the title. He said, "Population in the Organized Sector, Trade Unions and So-and-So." I said, "But we don't need to put all those in. We just have the heading."

So the agreement was signed, et cetera. Then he said now he would send people to develop projects with us. I said, "But we already have the programs. They are all there. That is what you are assisting us with." He said, "No, no, no. Now they have to be in the UN format." For six months people came. Someone came with UNESCO. "But we haven't signed anything with UNESCO." "Oh yes, you have. Education—this project is ours." "Organized labor—this project is ours." "Agricultural colleges—this project is ours." So FAO came, ILO came, the UN proper came. And WHO wanted to come. I said, "Thank you. We have a very good program. We don't need any help. We have Pop Council to help us."

But every UN organization turned up. We had never signed any agreement with any of them. They spent six months, seven months, eight months redoing a program that we had already developed, making stupid suggestions, really, like "Should you not have conferences with your TBAs every week?" I said, "Have you ever seen a TBA? If we invite her to a conference, she doesn't understand the word conference. She doesn't understand the word meeting, so what are you talking about TBA conference?" "Oh, well how will we supervise?" So these were the type of experts that turned up sometimes.

RJ: Let me just ask, because we've got about five minutes, for a final summary. Looking back at the impact of family planning in Pakistan at the time, and on your colleagues in the Planning Commission, what are your conclusions, with hindsight?

NS: I think in hindsight I was happy that we had the Family Planning Program. There was not actually that much experience in the world on family planning. We took a lot of advice from as many people as we could find. We took a lot of advice from the Population Council because it was in many countries—how they had organized the South Korean program, the Taiwanese programs—and from the Ford Foundation, which had offices in many countries. We, ourselves, went to visit some programs, like South Korea and so on.

I think what we didn't think about was the social-cultural environment at all. Everyone just decided that the method was the solution. The IUD would take care of everything. Then, when we also introduced the pill, well the pill was an additional thing that would take care of itself. We had an education and information program, but it seemed to be mostly to opinion leaders, rather than also to people or to identifying people who could make change happen.

Then what I think we didn't do at all, which took us a long time to realize, was we didn't involve enough men in the program at all. I think it was also an overlay of the feminist movement in which women should be in control over their lives. Though in the family planning movement, this was not the reason. It was like women should have control, and they were being denied control and paying for it with their health and lives. Therefore, to enable them, we must provide them the means to make decisions, but not realizing that the context in Pakistan and in India and in many other places—it was not women who were able to make decisions.

RJ: Yes. And I am hearing that the UN learned much more from Pakistan than it actually contributed.

NS: At that time. At that time, they didn't know anything. To be very honest, I was thinking to myself, "Except for the money, they are just a real problem for us."

RJ: But they did bring you some money.

NS: Some money, yes. They did bring us some money, but it was like, "What is the cost of this money?" So when Salas asked me to join, I told him, "My experience with the UN is really bad." I had had personal experience and it was all bad. So he said, "The reason I want you to join UNFPA is then you can use that experience to make it better," which is in fact one of the things that maybe made me think about joining the UN.

I made a speech in 1969, in the OECD, invited by Carl Wahren, maybe**,** on the view from developing countries. Barney Berelson was invited from the Population Council. What I said at that time, a lot of it is still valid in the 1980s. I was thinking to myself, "I could have made the speech fifteen years later, and it would still be relevant." I am here, and I can still say that I haven't changed it all that much. I have changed it a little bit, but not as much as one would like.

RJ: Well, I think the next tape we will turn to your experience within UNFPA and with the UN on a wider basis. So thank you very much, Nafis.

RJ: This is tape two of Richard Jolly interviewing Nafis Sadik on May 20th, 2002. We have now reached the afternoon. And Nafis, we have reached UNFPA, when you joined UNFPA, I think, in 1971. Perhaps you would say something about how you found UNFPA. It had been running about two years when you joined it, and Rafael Salas was the executive-director.

NS: I met Rafael Salas at a meeting in Bellagio, in fact the year before, in December of 1970. He asked me if I would consider joining UNFPA. I said I was coming to the States to do something with the University of North of Carolina for a month, early in 1971, and I would come

and see him and tell him whether I would or not. Anyway, I came to see him. I thought to myself and said, "I am not sure that I am really interested." He said, "Well, please go and see personnel," and he made the appointment for me to see personnel. There were not many people in UNFPA at that time. It had just started. It had been a year in operation, and they were still recruiting.

So I went to see personnel in UNDP (UN Development Programme). I think it must have been March or something like that of 1971. I was now director-general of the Family Planning Council in Pakistan, and the person who had been director-general before me had joined the UN and had been given a P-5 job. Exactly when, I'm not sure. When I went to interview at UNDP, they said they would be willing to offer me a P-4 position. I didn't know what the levels were in the UN, so I said, "Oh, P-4 is higher than P-5," said me, optimistically. They said, "No, of course not. P-5 is higher."

So I said, "Well, why would you then offer me a P-4, when my predecessor, who was exactly the same background as I was, had a P-5? And I know other people who have been director-generals, my level, in Pakistan have gotten P-5s as well." So he said, "Oh, but you are so young. What do you expect to become, the head of the organization?," in this very sarcastic way said this gentleman. I looked at him and said, "Anyway, it is none of your business, but in any case, what is wrong with that?" At that I left.

I went back and told Salas that I had had the interview, but I had met a very arrogant gentleman and I was not willing to join the UN, which was so unprincipled. He was offering me a P-4. In short of saying, "You are a woman, your husband earns," they implied everything, though nothing was actually said. So I told Salas, "I'm sorry, I cannot join unless I am given a

P-5," never having intended to join and not knowing what the levels were, or anything. And I went back to Pakistan, because I wasn't really looking for a job.

Then I got many pressures. Mr. Ali Gritly was the resident representative of UNDP, a very nice person in Pakistan. He was Egyptian. He kept saying to me, "But you know, P-4 is a very good offer." I said, "No, Mr. Gritly. I am not taking it just for this reason." They would come back, "I will give you a higher level, or something like that." I said, "I am not willing to take anything except a P-5 and that is it." Anyway, however it happened, Salas obviously managed it and then they made me the offer of P-5.

Now, you know, I didn't really know whether I wanted to go or not. So Ali Gritly said, "Now that you have made so much fuss, you have to take it." Anyway, my husband was very supportive and said, "You have followed me all my life, from place to place with jobs. Maybe it's about time that you should also think about a career." So that is how I then took the UN job. I took it for a year. There was a problem of my children, as well, because two were adopted, and whether the UN would accept that. But that was sorted out.

I came to UNFPA with my five children, not knowing that in these western countries no one receives anybody. We used to get cables from all visiting people in Pakistan, "Arriving so-and-so day, please meet and arrange transport and accommodation," and we went to the airport to receive them. So Mr. Gritly, who was the deputy-executive-director, sent me a cable saying, "Please stop by in Geneva on your way to New York," because he was doing some negotiations in Geneva. I sent him a cable back saying, "Arriving so-and-so flight, please meet and arrange accommodation. Arriving with five children,"—actually three children, because two of them were going to stop off in Iran. So he did come to the airport in a little minivan. He said, "You know, Nafis, this is not done in the UN or in the international world." I said, "Why not? We

always go to receive people." He said, "But we don't. You see, you can get taxis at the airport." I said, "You can get taxis in Pakistan, also, and you still expect us to receive." This was my first experience.

So I spent one day with him. He tried to brief me. I didn't understand very much about how the system worked. When I arrived in New York, Salas said, "You know the international community very well from your experience in Pakistan," because he had met me at this Bellagio meeting of all the donors. I knew, obviously, a lot of the donors because they were active in Pakistan, including USAID, and Japan, SIDA (Swedish International Development Assistance), DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance), and so on. "So organize a meeting on the private sector and family planning sector, and invite all the donors." Not knowing any better, I invited everyone I knew, like Michaner, head of SIDA, and the top person in DANIDA and USAID, and the World Bank president.

Three or four or five of them accepted. I told Salas, "These are the people coming." He was so shocked. He said, "Who wrote to these people?" I said, "I did." I think he was a bit taken aback. I said, "You told me, Mr. Salas, to organize a meeting and to ask all these people." He said, "I told you to go and see your friends in Pop Council." I said, "I also saw them and they are also coming. I also went to see the UN, and they are really horrible people, so I don't want to have to them there. They asked me why was I organizing the meeting. And I said, 'Because Mr. Salas asked me to organize the meeting.'"

Milos Matsura, who is in fact a friend of mine, said, "But you know, it is not for you, UNFPA, to organize the meeting, it is for us, the UN Population Division." I said, "And why for you? We are paying for the meeting. We are doing everything." He said, "No, you don't understand the UN. You pay, but we will do it."

RJ: Which part of the UN was this?

NS: This was the Population Division. They had those six advisors, and the fund had been first located there. But they hadn't done anything, so then UNFPA had been moved to UNDP. And not knowing any better, I just went on. I said, "Well, as far as I am concerned, I have been asked to do this. I am doing this regardless of whether you participate or don't participate." "Oh, no, we are not saying we won't participate, but you should go back and tell Mr. Salas that it should be done by us, and maybe with us in collaboration with WHO." I said, "But I will never get the meeting organized, and Salas will say, 'You can't even organize a meeting.' And I certainly can organize a meeting."

So I just went ahead and did it all by myself. I wrote a background paper. I don't know if you know a person called Thavaraja, who was in the organization at that time. He was already there when I joined and he considered me junior to him. He said, "Will you give me the paper to look at?" He wanted to correct my English. Not that my English was the best quality, or anything, but I said, "It is not a question of the English language. It is a question of content, and I don't want anything in the content changed." These are all my first experiences in the UN.

RJ: Anyway, the meeting took place. It was a great success because Michaner and all these people came. I was interviewed by *The New York Times*—a lowly person in the UNFPA. That was my first interview in a New York newspaper. I didn't think much of it. *New York Times*, so what? And Salas said, "How did you get this interview?" I said, "I don't know. She came and asked me, and I said, 'OK, I don't mind.' 'You don't mind?' I said, 'No, I don't mind at all.'"

I must say that Salas was a very generous person and a person who was greatly supportive of women, or I think anyone who could get things done. So he had no hang-ups about

women being in charge. I think if it was not for him, my career in UNFPA would not have gone the way it did. I didn't expect to become the head of the organization or anything. I just wanted to run some programs.

Next he sent me to Yugoslavia to get some contributions. He wanted an Eastern European country to contribute to the UNFPA. So again, it was like, "You know a lot of people from your past experience." I had been to many conferences, and I knew some people in Yugoslavia. So I arrived in Yugoslavia. The UNDP office hadn't made any arrangements for me. There was no one at the airport. The Pakistan ambassador, someone I knew, happened to be at the airport, so he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I have been sent here by the executive-director to get some money." He said, "Where are you staying?" I said, "I don't know. I am going to try to find a hotel." So he said, "Didn't they arrange it?" I said, "I sent a cable to the office. Obviously something has gone wrong." Anyway, I went to stay with him.

The next day, I turned up at the UNDP office and asked to see the resrep (resident representative). The secretary comes back with a message, "Ask her what is her level." I said, "What do you mean, my level? I am a technical advisor. What is my level? I am a P-5." He said, "Well, in that case, you should see my deputy." I said, "Fine, but I don't really think the deputy can do what I want done." So anyway, I saw the deputy. The deputy said, "What have you come for?" I said, "I want to see the minister of finance, the minister of foreign affairs, and any other person you think can give us money." So he said, "It is not your level to see the minister of foreign affairs or the minister of finance." I said, "What should my level be, and why would my executive-director ask me to come and get some money if these are the people I have to see to get the money?"

Anyway, he said, "There is no way you are going to get these appointments. Maybe I can arrange some other appointments." So I rang up a friend of mine who had been a parliamentarian—Vida Tom_i_. I remember her so well because she was so wonderful. So I rang her up, and another person whose name I have forgotten, a doctor. So Vida Tom_i_ —we had become friendly at many meetings and all that—said, "It is not so easy to get money like that, but let me see what I can do." I said, "Well, you have to do it because it is a matter of my honor, almost, because I have told this resrep, 'Whether you arrange it or not, I am going to see them.'" But she did arrange it and I saw them. Even if it was for five minutes to drop in, I did see them. And they promised to give us $7,000.

So I went back and Salas, I think, was very impressed. Of course, I didn't think much of it really. But looking back, I probably just disregarded all the rules and regulations. But I was really angry. I told Salas, "You know, these UN people are really horrible people. He was asking me my rank. What's that got to do with it? If you've got to do a job, you've got to do a job. You must help us. Everyone must help everyone else."

My next experience in the UN was I still didn't have an office. There were several offices vacant, and it happened to be there was one office vacant in the corner. Salas said, "Just go and select. Any office that is vacant can be your office." This was before I had organized the meeting for him, when I had just come. So I selected an office which looked quite nice, which was empty. It was the corner office. So I told Salas, and he said, "OK, fine." He didn't care. So I went to whoever was the administrative person in UNFPA, and they said, "But you know, I will agree to give it to you if Salas says so, but you are not entitled to it because it has three windows, or four windows, and a carpet."

RJ: And you were not a D-1 or a D-2.

NS: Right. I said, "Well, cut up the carpet. I don't really want the carpet. Block the windows. It doesn't really matter to me. I am quite happy with any office." The other office that was vacant was somewhere in front of the elevator. "Oh well, of course you don't want that." I said, "I don't care. I will make it quite a nice office. I am not bothered." So they said, "Are you sure you will take that office?" I said, "Yes, I am positive. I just want to have an office." So I took that office, but I really thought to myself that that room lay vacant for eight months. Nobody occupied it and they wouldn't give it to anyone. These are things that don't leave a good impression. You just get over them and you don't think about it.

And Salas actually never thought about these things. He said, "Just go see which office is vacant. If you like it, take it." So when I told him, "Really? I didn't know that. What does that mean? Why can't you get it? Shall I tell them?" I said, "No, maybe you shouldn't, because then I'll be very unpopular because you will have told them." That much, at least, I knew. So UNFPA was not still very organized.

RJ: What were your formal job roles as technical advisor?

NS: It was to help with developing the program and the policy of UNFPA with my background and experience. So then I decided that, to help with the policy and program, we needed to have a proper structure. It was very loose. There was an operations group, and there was a technical or something group. And then the technical group did the program, and the operations group implemented it without a consultation ever. I said, "This is a very strange arrangement. They don't know what is happening, and the technical are totally out of it in the implementation stage."

Then I suggested an organizational chart, the program division, with Africa, Asia, the Latin American countries, Europe, and the Middle East. For Africa, we should have a special

strategy because they were not really interested in family planning. It was more on getting awareness and research and so on. So we did a lot of census and research and analysis and presenting what they needed in order to have a population policy. That went to the executive board and the institutional structure was agreed. Then Salas made me director of programs but with a great deal of difficulty. I can't remember what funny title I had, which was not that I was above other people. I was in actual fact, but they didn't think that because they reported to someone senior to me.

I chose to tell Mr. Halver Gille, "Why do we have to do all this subterfuge? Either I am or I am not." For me all this was not very important.

RJ: You were chief of program division?

NS: No, projects it was called first—chief of projects division. It was still projects in each of the regions, and then later it became the program division. But I started as chief of projects. How I became accepted in UNFPA—because then they thought that I was getting too much importance—was when Mr. Gille decided to reorganize all the people, because he couldn't get people to do what he wanted.

RJ: What was Gille's role?

NS: He was the deputy-executive-director of programs. We had an American deputy-executive-director. At that time, the Americans were our number one donors. Keppel was the deputy-executive-director of policy and administration.

RJ: I was going to ask about Salas. How much, looking back, was Salas a person of vision and organization for getting UNFPA established?

NS: He was a very great visionary. He knew what the organization should be. He was not interested in and didn't have that much knowledge about programs and policies of the

programs. But he knew how to position UNFPA in the UN system, because we started as one of the funds of the UNDP, as they still have so many of them—five, or six, or eight funds. And he made this into an independent organization.

RJ: And he could see from the beginning that that needed to be done.

NS: Yes. As he said when he first came, he was given a room next to the kitchen. He said he used to get the smell of all the food, and anyone who came to see him came to this back room. We had so much difficulty with UNDP representatives because they were, many of them, opposed to family planning. In the Latin American and African countries they used to say, "Well, this is not acceptable to the government." We used to say, "But this is your job. This is our job to be advocates." So we had a lot of difficulty with UNDP in this kind of way.

So Salas worked on that, and he left the program to Halver Gille, who was the director, and to myself, as the chief of programs. He listened to us always. He didn't interfere with the programs. Everyone came to see him for programs, and "give us more money." He used to always talk to them, in general, and say, "Now you will have to talk to him or to her." He never interfered in it. But he saw his role on the outside as a political person, as a fundraiser, and he managed to get UNFPA positioned in the UN. He got himself raised from a D-2 to USG.

RJ: Initially he was D-2.

NS: Then he became ASG (assistant secretary-general) and then USG (under-secretary-general). It all went through the executive board, ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), and the General Assembly. We had our new policy on priority systems and all that. While we did it, he managed to get UNFPA taken seriously. Then he had this vision, always, that we must get a huge increase in resources. His view was that since Asia had the biggest population problem, he must convince the Japanese to become a major donor. So he spent a lot of time on just doing

that, and he succeeded. The Japanese increased our contribution in just one year from like a few million to like twenty-something million. Then all the other donors, because Japan increased, all increased, including the U.S. The U.S., at one time, used to match every contribution. Fifty percent of our contributions came from the U.S. to start with.

RJ: How long did that continue?

NS: I think for about ten years. Then gradually, they started to reduce and became about 30 percent.

RJ: This was under Nixon, initially?

NS: Nixon, and I think several other people. Who were the others? It stopped in [Ronald] Reagan's time.

RJ: Yes.

NS: We had [John F.] Kennedy, we had [Jimmy] Carter, all these administrations supporting.

RJ: [Lyndon] Johnson, presumably. Johnson rather than Kennedy, as such, because Kennedy was already dead. But Johnson, Nixon, Carter, and [Gerald] Ford.

NS: Yes, all of these. Salas had many friends in the State Department from his Philippine days, like Richard Armitage, and all these people. They also helped him. So he worked hard on funding, and funding increase. Funding would be the key to becoming more autonomous.

RJ: Just let me ask you to elaborate a bit the intellectual ideas.

NS: The intellectual ideas also were that we shouldn't make UNFPA just be a family planning organization. It was more population and development in the broader sense, and that population issues were part of developmental issues. Family planning was just one of the means.

But somehow, we got stuck a lot with family planning because the U.S. and UK were two countries which always were pushing that we must provide more contraceptives. At the beginning, also, Sweden was very much contraceptive-oriented. It didn't want us to do more things in the population development connections. Like social-cultural research was a waste of money. Gender issues were a waste of money, was their view. Data systems—why do we need data systems? We had many arguments on the executive board, that countries need to understand their situation before they will have a policy. If they don't even know what their situation is, how will they have a population policy?

RJ: So you were pressing studies at country level.

NS: At country level, right.

RJ: Advocacy at country level.

NS: Advocacy, and for the countries themselves to make the change—not that we provide the money and they therefore take it because they want the money, but they are not really believing in having a family planning program.

RJ: And you worked through universities and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) at country level.

NS: Always with the NGOs. We worked from the beginning with many NGOs and with many universities for studies. We financed the whole African census program, a large part of the first round. The second round we reduced the budgetary contribution, but still provided a huge amount of technical assistance and equipment, et cetera, because we thought that the comparison between two censuses would be a basis of a good analysis of population and demographic issues as part of developmental issues.

We financed the big study in the Division for the Advancement of Women on the status of women and family planning for the first women's conference in 1975 (UN World Conference of the International Women's Year)—this huge study that was very effective was supported by UNFPA. Helvi Sipila was very keen on it, so we supported that big study on family planning and the status of women for the Mexico conference. We did many things through the UN system as well. Maternal mortality and family planning—there were no studies on maternal mortality in WHO. We financed the first studies on maternal mortality. In fact, within UNFPA there was a huge debate whether this was a legitimate area for us to be involved in, because we didn't have that much money. My view was that maternal mortality and family planning are very closely connected. Many of the women were dying because they were young, their pregnancies are so close, they are not well-nourished, they are anemic, et cetera. Obviously, the supporters won out so we financed that first study in WHO, which didn't have any data on studies on maternal mortality, collecting morality rates because they said it was too difficult.

RJ: Who was the main opposition?

NS: In the UNFPA?

RJ: Yes.

NS: Well, in UNFPA, I think generally there was a genuine debate whether we had enough money. What was correct in the positions of those who opposed the financing was why didn't WHO do it itself? There was really no good answer for it. My view was that if we wanted to have a good database to push family planning, we needed data on maternal mortality. That makes a good case.

So then WHO later financed some of its own studies in Chile and all that—maternal mortality studies partly financed by us also—on maternal mortality in Chilean hospitals, which at

that time 70 or 80 percent were due to unsafe or illegal abortions, and the complications of abortion. Then it came out with that pregnancy too soon or too early, the unintended pregnancies study that came out and became quite a part of the maternal mortality reduction programs and all that. So UNFPA did those kinds of things through their global and regional programs.

RJ: And Salas was always supportive?

NS: He was always supportive. He was a great believer in having as broad an approach to population issues and having as large a number of countries to participate in our program. In fact, Mongolia asked us for assistance in the 1970s and said that they wanted to increase the one million population to become as large as the Chinese population.

RJ: You supported that study?

NS: He said, "We support anything that the government wants. So now tell them, Nafis, how to do it."

RJ: For Mongolia to grow as big as the Chinese? Has that ever been put on the record?

NS: They asked for it. Salas didn't say they would become as big as China. He said, "Just help them with what they want to do." So I said, "I don't think that you can become one billion, ever."

RJ: But they really did ask?

NS: They said, "We are this little country surrounded by this huge country, so we want to have a huge population like China." They didn't say exactly, "We want to be one billion," but "we want to have a big population." So I said, "You can reduce your maternal mortality, your infant mortality. Have a family planning program and it will do all that." That is how they introduced a family planning program.

RJ: Can you think of other countries where the goal of the national family planning program was to increase more rapidly the population?

NS: Mongolia is the only one that asked for this. Other countries didn't. Our initial programs in Latin America were not to reduce fertility. It was to reduce maternal mortality. Chile, Mexico, and Cuba—our first programs were Chile, Cuba, and Mexico. It was to reduce the high rate of maternal mortality due to unsafe or illegal abortion, and to introduce family planning as a way to reduce illegal abortions. Mexico later changed to also add reduction of fertility, but initially the programs were all—and many programs in Africa started as part of maternal-child health programs to improve the health of mothers and children. Many of them had population policies that came after the census rounds, but they had already introduced a family planning program. By the 1980s, every country had a family planning program for whatever objective. There were different objectives, but Mongolia was the only country that asked us for assistance to increase.

RJ: Let me ask you a bit about the developed country position—of course, the American position but also some others. My memory was that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were several books on the desperate problem of growing population. The world would run out of food. *India and Famine* in 1975 was one of the big books.

NS: The most important was *The Population Bomb*.

RJ: Paul Ehrlich.

NS: Yes, Paul Ehrlich. But there were also other books. I think there were some Pop Council studies on India and Pakistan. What was Cole and Hoover's study on demographics in India and all the subcontinent?

RJ: Did this lead the United States to put a lot of pressure on the new UNFPA to cut fertility at all costs?

NS: Not at all costs. I think the UNFPA was set up because there was a study led by General Draper.

RJ: Bill Draper's father?

NS: Bill Draper's father, on the need for the UN to become more operational in the population field. That is how the UNFPA was set up. The U.S. said that it would match any contribution completely.

RJ: So this was Johnson?

NS: This was during Johnson's time, yes. I think so, I'm not sure, 1967 or 1968 was the study—1968 maybe. In 1969, then, the UNFPA was set up.

RJ: So it might even be Nixon. We should check this and fix it on the transcript.

NS: I think it was Nixon. I think it was in Eisenhower's time, because General Draper was very friendly with Eisenhower.

RJ: Eisenhower was way back in the 1950s.

NS: But it was through him because then he became very friendly with Nixon. Draper's connection was in the Eisenhower regime. The Danes made the first contribution to this fund, and the U.S. matched it. The U.S. had to have a contribution in order to match. So the first contribution was the Danes. I think it was two hundred and something thousand dollars, whatever it was in Danish currency. The U.S. matched it totally. And then the Swedes and the Norwegians and the Dutch and the UK and all joined.

Japan joined a bit later. General Draper was very friendly with Prime Minister Kishi and organized for him a visit by Kishi and the Japanese parliamentarians to countries in

Asia—Bangladesh and India—to see the population problem for themselves. I think Japan made a very small contribution to start with, then Draper managed to persuade Kishi to persuade the government to increase its role. Salas's view was that Asia had this big population, so Japan must become a big donor. But he used to always tell Japan, "You should be the number one," but the Japanese always used to say, "No, no, no, we can only be number two to the Americans." They never wanted to exceed the Americans. They could have, but they would not. They did not want to exceed the Americans.

So it was to reduce fertility. In fact, when this Mongolia program went to the executive board, the Americans were very angry. They said, "What is this Neanderthal policy?" Salas said, "I don't even know what Neanderthal means. Tell me what does it mean." I said, "It's a very old, outmoded approach. It means from the Dark Ages." So he said, "Well, we need to be accepted by all countries."

But in the UN itself, in the executive board, when the first ECOSOC resolution was being passed on the UNFPA—I think it was 1972 or 1973—on the mandate of the UNFPA, the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) at that time was so opposed. Brazil was so opposed. I mean, there were all kinds of things said against it.

RJ: And the Chinese were surely very opposed.

NS: The Chinese didn't speak so much. They were opposed.

RJ: Of course, the Chinese had not yet joined.

NS: No, the Chinese joined when—in 1973 or 1974. So I think China was not there. But in the beginning, in 1974, and all that, the Chinese used to publicly oppose population policies and fertility decline because they used to say that population is an asset. So in the governing council, there were all these alliances—the Russians with the Brazilians and so on,

talking against, and the Indians and Pakistan and the U.S. very much in support. In the end, of course, the pro people won out always in the discussion.

The first ECOSOC resolution on the mandate of the UNFPA is quite interesting. All these debates were really quite interesting to listen to because the Russians said we should just do what any country wants, and that's it and nothing else. But the resolution came out that while policies were the responsibility of the country, the UNFPA role was to coordinate and help countries understand policies and implement the policies. They didn't want us to help with any operational programs. But obviously all that went, and gradually even the USSR and everyone else started to come around.

RJ: And at the same time, curiously, the Americans, at the time of Reagan, moved from being supportive to—

NS: Well, in 1974 there was the first population conference (UN World Population Conference), the intergovernmental one. It was organized by the UN.

RJ: In Bucharest.

NS: In Bucharest. Salas they wouldn't give any role to, even though we were financing a lot of the things. We were working in the background with the documents. There was that famous whole night we spent on this famous recommendation—every couple and every individual. It was a strange formulation, but it was because the Vatican and many other countries—Algeria, China, and many others—said only couples should be entitled to contraceptives. The discussion obviously was that every individual should be allowed to. So the compromise was every couple and every individual should have the means and access, et cetera. That was in 1974.

RJ: But Salas, in the end, was not allowed to speak at that conference?

NS: No, he was not in the opening session—nothing in 1974. In 1984, when the 1984 conference (Second World Population Conference), or two years before, was being agreed by the UN, the then SG (Secretary-General) decided that Salas should be the secretary-general of the conference. That was the only way for UNFPA to have a role because all conferences are "UN conferences." I think the Secretary-General then was [Kurt] Waldheim. He realized that maybe this would be the wise thing to do, and so they appointed Salas secretary-general of the conference. That was when UNFPA came of age in the UN system.

RJ: Actually, strictly, it was [Javier] Pérez de Cuéllar.

NS: In 1984, was he there?

RJ: Yes, he came in in 1982.

NS: So then he did it in 1982.

RJ: But my point for the moment—there are so many interesting questions—is was the shift in the U.S. position from being one of the leaders in pressing family planning and fertility reduction—when and how did that change?

NS: That's where it happened—in the 1984 conference. Reagan came into power in 1984, I think.

RJ: No, in 1980. At the beginning of 1981, I suppose it is.

NS: They used to contribute to us, and in fact had pledged for the year 1985 $45 million, which was at that time a lot. It was a big increase. They were still the number one donor. But by 1984, they had already started getting all the Vatican pressure, and other pressure, and the conservative pressure inside the U.S., combined with the anti-Chinese people in the Congress who were opposed to the Chinese population policy.

RJ: One-child policy.

NS: And they started using the writings of Steve Mosher, and Judith [Banister]—what is her name—the demographer. I have forgotten her last name.

RJ: We will find it and add it to the transcript.

NS: Judith was much more of a professional, so it was based on data she had found. Then Chris Smith had got this as an angle. He had picked this up.

RJ: Congressman Chris Smith.

NS: And Senator [Jesse] Helms had picked this up because they were against family planning. They found that this Chinese one-child policy was a good way to attack UNFPA, as well. We went into China in 1979, at the request of the Chinese government, and then developed our program, which included a census and so many other things as well. But by this time, Reagan had come into power, and they started asking for information, and we were providing it. They said we should not support abortion programs, and we said we didn't. So this was always being asked for. And the U.S. always had a list of countries that it didn't want their money to go to—with the UNDP, with UNICEF and us. We had to always show a segregated, artificial account.

RJ: Even before the China case?

NS: Even before the China case. They had Cuba and Romania and some of the East European countries on this list of countries that were embargoed from U.S. funds, from all sources. This included UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA. It had nothing to do with abortion. But by 1984, it was the abortion issue, though we had never supported abortion for the reason that in the UN you couldn't get abortion agreed as a subject of support by any of the countries. The Reagan administration and Chris Smith used the argument that because China had this one-child

policy, and they had forced abortion and forced sterilization, and we were supporting the program, and therefore we were involved in forced sterilization.

So in 1984, at the international conference on population in Mexico (Second World Population Conference), the U.S. delegation was led by Buckley—not the one who writes, but James Buckley, who was a very extreme conservative. Bill Draper III was on that delegation, I remember, and Ben Wattenberg—the one who writes the demography books. You know, the *Birth Dearth*. His book is quite famous—Ben Wattenberg. He was on the delegation. And there was a huge fight. Alan Keyes was on the delegation for the U.S. mission to the UN. The Europeans were getting fed up with Alan Keyes. He used to read them all kinds of things, "We are going to tell your governments that you are not cooperating with us."

A lot of artificial issues were raised there on occupied lands and so on. For the first time in a UN conference, there was a vote on one of the issues—migration, including migrating to occupied territories. The U.S. and Israel were the only two who opposed it. Everyone else supported it, including all the Europeans. So the U.S. really lost out on all those. Finally, they decided to join the consensus, even though they had some reservations.

At that time, we had long discussions with the U.S. delegation and convinced them that we didn't support abortion. So then they released, in theory, the $45 million, but were going to pay it in two installments. There was a USAID administrator, Peter MacPherson, who decided to be careful. So the $10 million that was still left to be disbursed, he asked Congress for agreement to releasing the $10 million, which he didn't have to ask. He said in that letter he was sure that we were not supporting abortion. But of course, that was a way to let the Congress come into the debate. Steve Sinding was in USAID, the director of the population program. He tried hard to help us. "Can you redesign the program this way?," he said.

I was sent off to China and spent a lot of time with China, trying to get them to—they were not willing, but in the interest of getting the money to UNFPA, "OK, if it didn't make any difference, we could do more in contraceptive supplies." In the end, in spite of all that, they didn't give us the $10 million. Then the next year, they decided not to give us any money.

RJ: This is now 1985?

NS: 1986, now. In 1985, we did get money. In 1986, we didn't. Then we didn't get any more money from the U.S. until [Bill] Clinton came into power, because [George H.W.] Bush also wouldn't give us any money, even though Bush, in his days as senator, was responsible for debate in the Congress allowing the U.S. to be involved in population programs. He was one of the originators of U.S. policies in population. But when he became president—when he was vice president, in fact, I went to see him, to ask why the Reagan administration—and couldn't he do something with Mr. MacPherson. He said, "Oh, it's not for me," I remember him telling me. I would have to talk to Peter MacPherson. I said, "Well, Peter MacPherson says it is in the White House." But obviously no one was going to do anything.

RJ: Let me just ask your experience in situations like this, when the American administration is anti for whatever reasons. One is, do you often find the official in, say, USAID personally much more sympathetic?

NS: Oh, definitely. In this case, the USAID people were all very unhappy and were trying to be as helpful to us as possible—the directors of the programs and all that. In any way, they also saw this as a threat to themselves. So they were all quite helpful and tried to do the best they could. But in the end, they were not able to because they had to send everything to the White House to be cleared. The White House had decided, actually, not to give us the money, so it didn't matter what was said.

RJ: And a second question—your negotiation with the Chinese government, in order to present things in a way that would be more acceptable to the White House.

NS: Well, the Chinese, in the first program in 1985, it was not major shifts in their program at all. They were not happy, but they were willing to be accommodating. But we, later, didn't have a program with China for two years. This was myself, now. This was when I was executive director, and it had nothing to do with the U.S. It was before the 1994 conference (International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD), in preparation for the 1994 conference. They kept asking me, "Is this U.S. pressure, or is this UNFPA, itself?" It took me a long time to convince them that it had nothing to do with the U.S. It was because I had now gotten all this information about their provincial laws and so on that I was very unhappy with, that I had not known about. And I expected the central government to, in fact, implement the agreement we had, which was that it was not coercive, that these were policies, but the implementation was not going to be forced on people. So I said, "When you say to me that you don't have any control over the provinces, and the provinces make their own laws, then this makes me very uncomfortable. In which case then, I must have programs with the provinces."

Then they said, "No, you can't have programs with the provinces." Then they agreed, in an exchange of formal letters, that they would go through all the provincial laws and have deleted all those items that we considered coercive. First they said it was a question of translation. I said, "No, it is not a question of translation." This was all behind the scenes, obviously, but I said, "In no way am I going to say to our executive board that I can guarantee that our program is not coercive." I didn't say, "I don't really care what your policies are, but as far as far as I am concerned, I only want to guarantee my program. So long as I am not able to guarantee that, I don't think I can have a program."

So we negotiated for two years in China. We had a gap, which we didn't talk about. But all the time, I kept negotiating with them. I think finally they were convinced that it was nothing to do with the U.S., that it was UNFPA's views. Finally they said to me, "We understand that you say all this publicly about women's rights so you have to make sure that every country follows it." I said, "Yes, I do. And I really firmly believe it." They said, "We believe it also. So now we will have a program as you want it."

Then we did have a program. This year, 2002, they gave me an award in March to recognize the fact that I had resisted U.S. pressure. The U.S. always put pressure to move out of China. They used to, in fact, tell the Chinese also, "You should withdraw from the UNFPA." They used to come to ask me, "What has to be done? You are quite upset." I said, "No, I have never said anything to anyone." I said, "I believe we should have a program in China." "But the U.S. wants to give you money if you don't have a program with us." I said, "Really, on a matter of principle, I don't really care about—I mean, I do care, but I will not have the U.S. money because they cannot tell me what to do outside of the executive board."

I said to the U.S., "You can tell me what you like in the executive board, and if the executive board agrees, I will do it. But I am not willing to take instructions from any one government, no matter how important or powerful that government is because this is like a slippery slope. Then every government will give me instructions."

RJ: As a matter of global governance, the role of the U.S. in these matters is often very insensitive.

NS: Well, I think they try hard. And if you give in, they will obviously be very pleased. But if you don't give in, they are not—in my case, they did not say, "She should be removed, or she shouldn't do this." I said to them always, "When I present the program to the executive

board on China, it will be a program that I am fully behind, and you must support if you are interested in what you say you are interested in—in changing policies. You cannot change policies by condemning big governments. You can only change it by demonstrating that there is an alternate way to do it. That is what we are doing." I said, "That can be our only role. We are too small to be telling governments what to do. So we can only show them what we know from our technical experience."

In the end, we helped the U.S. to negotiate with the Chinese when our next program went to the executive board in 1989, or something like that, or 1990, to join the consensus. They had many private meetings, and then they were convinced that our program was OK. So those that came to the executive board didn't approve the program, but didn't object to it. In my discussions with the U.S., sometimes congressmen used to say, "Lady, we want to"—you know how they talk, "Lady, we want to support you, but you are not being very helpful."

I said, "Congressman, why don't you withdraw from China? Take away your $10 billion commercial trade that you have. You will have an influence. Why are you after my $10 million? I am having a positive influence." So he said, "Oh, but we are not doing population." I said, "It doesn't matter. The $10 billion would really have an effect. If you really want to make your point, do that." I said, "Secondly, a government from outside, shouting to another government, will not change their policies. In fact, it has the opposite effect." I said, "Did you know that in 1984, the government was considering dropping the one-child policy because we had financed some studies on the alternatives to the one-child policy? But once you said they must drop it, they said, 'Forget it. We are never going to drop it.'"

There were alternatives. They must just increase the spacing between children. It would have maybe not exactly the same effect, but some of the same effect. The Chinese officials were

considering it. This was a better way to do it. But once the U.S. came out, publicly condemning them in human rights. I said, "They would have even listened to the human rights part, but you want them to change their policy because *you* think it is the wrong policy. They say, 'We are independent. We are not going to have policies dictated to us by some other government.'" The U.S. is very insensitive.

RJ: Do you think the UN could learn from each other in this role? I am thinking of the point you make when you said to the Americans, "Make your points in the board, then we decide."

NS: I think those are matters of principle. Remember Carol when she came? She also did the rounds, so she was asking for advice.

RJ: Carol Bellamy.

NS: And even Mark. They all do the rounds. And when they asked what are the lessons that I have learned, I said, "Several lessons." I said, "One is, tell all governments that they can suggest names to you, but you will not take them unless they fit the profile and job requirements. Then never break it. Don't take one person, because if you break the rule once then you will be forced to take others. Distance yourself. Just say, 'This is my procedure. So all the names should come to personnel who you will review and make a short list. If your candidate is on the short list, I will certainly consider. But I am not going to consider a person because he or she is of a certain nationality."

The Danes, in fact, said to me, "But your requirements are too high." I said, "In that case, how come we get so many applications? We may not get Danes, but we get others. The whole idea is to have good people." "That is one experience. In the beginning, people push you. But gradually, they start to recognize that maybe you have a point. Secondly," I said, "don't let

any important person within the system push you to take a person as a consultant. Secretary-generals will tell you to take ambassadors and give them a consultancy." I said, "It is an easy thing to do, I suppose. You can give someone a consultancy." I said, "But my response has been I have no money. They say, 'What do you mean you don't have money for consultants?' I said, 'No, I don't need any money. I am the executive-director, so I can do what I like. But all the money is with the divisions, and they hire consultants as they need. I can't really tell them to hire an ambassador. He will not fulfill the qualification needed.'"

I said, "I have had many bad experiences." I said, "This is my one protection. I say, 'I have no money. And I am not allowed. All the money is allocated for other things.'" "The third thing is, don't let any government"—I didn't say donor—"tell what you to do outside of the executive board. You can listen to advice. You get lots of good ideas from everywhere, but they can't push you to make a decision outside of the executive board which you don't want to make."

I said, "And my final advice is that in the executive board, also, don't accept to do something that you really believe you cannot do just to make members happy. You should say, 'I don't agree with what you are asking me to do. I will try to do it, but I will tell you'—and put it on record that it is not something I want to do—'I don't think it should be done, and it may not be done very well.'"

In the beginning, I think they used to think that I was arrogant and who did I think I was. But gradually, they used to ask me, "Can you do it?" I would say "yes" or "no." I said, "Many times there were good ideas." I was telling the executive board once, I said, "Sometimes there are such good ideas, but you are so irritated with some of the other silly things you have been asked to do which are of no use to the organization that you want to throw out the good ideas." I

said, "I don't want to do that." So I said, "The executive board has to become more a dialogue between us. We are all on the same side. I don't think I am hiding anything. And most of all, one has to be as truthful and fair and honest. Don't have stuff you have to hide. Have all your stuff outside, so they know what you have. Then you can make the point, 'You want me to do this? I don't have enough people.'" I said, "This is my advice to all of you."

RJ: I think all of those are very interesting. I tried, actually, for the record—perhaps I should be—we are interviewing you—but on this question of not taking anyone pushed by a particular government, when I was with UNICEF, with Jim Grant, couldn't he agree with you and with Bill Draper on a public statement with the three? Jim would always say, "No, somehow we can't all say it." I said, "Surely if the three—"

NS: There were two things that I asked UNICEF and UNDP to do with me together. One was on the staffing. I said that we would so much stronger if we all had a—

RJ: Common front.

NS: A common front. And I said, "The second thing is that we should not agree that posts belong to any region or any group." UNICEF, in fact, does that better than UNDP. We are so linked up with UNDP, and all the regional directors had to come from the region. I said, "To me, that is really a bad system. We are the UN, so we should not have to have an Asian in Asia, and a Latin American in Latin America. We should have people who served in those regions. We should have people from the field, but not necessarily Asians and Africans and so on." I said, "But somehow in the UNDP—and we in UNFPA follow the UNDP."

I did this once for Latin America, and the Latin Americans complained to me for two years non-stop, "How have you got a non-Latin American resident director?" I said, "Because I have a Latin American somewhere else. I have a Latin American as chief director of policy." I

said, "I think all the regions should be represented at the senior level, but not necessarily in their regions. That would mean that all the developing countries only have their regions to be the head of. This can't be good policy. They can't be in administration or in strategy or policy; this was really a bad system, but we need all of us to do it together.

I tried with Mark also, and Mark was almost agreeable, but then backed out. But I am not sure why we can't all do it together. UNICEF has one program, so they are much better in this respect.

RJ: I remember in UNICEF, when we said, in Iraq, when during the bombing we were going to send in our regional director, and WHO said, "But your regional director for the Middle East is an American."

NS: Richard Reid.

RJ: Yes, Richard Reid. And Jim said, "He is not an American. He is the UNICEF staff regional director, and he should lead the program." I strongly believe that.

NS: Those are reforms that should be done. I have other reforms in the UN that I will suggest to you.

RJ: We will come to those, I think, tomorrow. Let me ask you some other questions here. Being a Pakistani at the UN, and given that Pakistan is an Islamic country, has that ever been a focus for Islamic governments, or people saying you are not behaving as a good Islamic woman?

NS: I had no problems with being a Muslim, or any of this kind of thing, until we started preparing for the 1994 conference. Then the Vatican started this campaign against the program of action and brought Muslim leaders, et cetera, to the Vatican to discuss the 1994 program of action with them. They said, "Why was it based on individual rights, and not only on couples'

rights as previous UN documents had been?" I was actually taken quite unawares with this comment. I thought that the Vatican was all behind human rights, but they were not behind human rights for women in control over their fertility, you see.

It was only then, in 1993 I think, for the first time I heard from some Muslim countries saying, "Why do you listen to the Catholics? You are a Muslim." I had a hard time explaining to them that I am not listening to the Catholics. The Vatican is there as a government, not as a religion." They said, "Why are you discussing with them and not with us?," with the "us" meaning Islamic religious leaders. I said, "I wasn't discussing with them as religious leaders,"—which was of course not totally true—"but discussing with them only because they are a government. Otherwise, I would have never even bothered to discuss with them." So it only came up in that context—never otherwise.

In the case of Iran, when [Ruhollah] Khomeini took over Iran, one of the first cables that came to us was, "We have nothing more to do with your program. We withdraw from your program." And the program was stopped. But a few years later, just after Khomeini died, or the year he was dying, they decided that they needed to have a family planning program. They invited me to come to Iran. I think it was 1987, or 1988, something like that. The Iranian delegation asked to see me and sent me messages. Then the minister invited me to come to Iran, but also reminded me that as a Muslim I would have to adhere to—I don't know what, something in the letter.

I said, "Well, I am a Muslim, and I will behave like a Muslim, but not an Iranian." This went on. The main demand was that I should wear a chador. I said, "On no account will I ever wear a chador, no matter what." Dr. Wilahty then was the foreign minister. He is a physician. He said, "Dr. Sadik, we really need you. You must come, and you must see our program. You

must help us." I said, "I am very keen to help you. And UNFPA has a program." It wasn't that we didn't have a program. "We have a program and it is going very well. I would like to come and help you by being an advocate, but I am not prepared to wear the chador." He said, "Oh, we will give you a chador." I said, "It's not that. I can buy a chador, but I am not willing to wear it on a matter of principle."

In the end, they agreed, "OK, you can come." I said, "Listen, I go to my villages in Pakistan, for example, and I wear a kind of chador. That means I don't wear a sari, I wear a shalwar, and I put my dupata on my head. That I am willing to do, but I am not willing to have my hair covered, and no hair showing, because that is not what I do in Pakistan. I just want to make the point that I am a Muslim, and therefore I should be allowed to behave as a Muslim from Pakistan." He said, "But Pakistan is a Muslim country." I said, "They don't insist that anyone come dressed in a certain way."

With all this, they finally agreed that I could come. I even met Mr. [Hashemi] Rafsanjani. I have some pictures with him with my head not fully covered. They put a picture in the *Kehan International News* with my hair half showing. It was quite interesting.

RJ: Is there anything more I should ask about the early days of UNFPA, before you became executive director? For example, Julia Henderson—did she enter into—

NS: Julia Henderson was just leaving. I had already had some contact with her because she had invited me to a social workers meetings, social workers in family planning, that the UN had organized under her. So I had met her, and we had discussed the Pakistan program. You know, in the 1960s, the Pakistan program was very popular. How did we use social workers? I said, "We don't have social workers, but we have lady health visitors." We had family planning

workers who were, in fact, communication people like the social workers and found out what people needed and did counseling.

She was the director of the Social Affairs Division, which was still in New York. By the time I came to New York, she was leaving to become—

RJ: IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation) director.

NS: In fact, I remember asking her why she was leaving. She said, "Because there are no more opportunities in the UN," because they wouldn't make her the ASG in charge at that time because she was a woman. So she left. We had quite a lot of things to do with her in—we funded some things jointly with IPPF, and a communications center with IPPF, I remember.

RJ: Were they very useful for UNFPA?

NS: In many countries, we worked with the local affiliates of the IPPF. That was very helpful for us. They were the implementers. For example, the training was done by the family planning affiliate in many countries—in Tanzania, in Ethiopia, in Nigeria. In Afghanistan, the family guidance association was the one we worked with. In many countries we worked, always with the agreement of the government, but with the national affiliate.

RJ: But did it enable UNFPA to do things which they might otherwise not have been able to do?

NS: Yes, it was to get services in a country. The government didn't want to provide the services, but they wanted the services provided.

RJ: Yes. And you couldn't provide the services—

NS: Directly, no. We did not have the infrastructure and wanted to build national capacity. So what we did was we negotiated with the government, for example, that the government clinics would be available for the family planning worker of the family planning

association to come and give the services in those centers. We were financing them. We would provide the contraceptives or the training or whatever was needed. So that was an arrangement in many countries.

And in many countries, both the government and the association and some other NGOs were all financed by us to expand the outreach of services. Then, in some countries, we used also the NGOs to do house-to-house education and carrying of contraceptives to homes where women couldn't come out of their homes—so maybe some other NGOs, like some women NGOs who did village training and so on. So we worked a lot with them. In fact, our ECOSOC resolution, unlike UNDP at that time, allowed us to work with NGOs. The UN agencies wanted us only to work through UN agencies. That was another thing that we did differently from UNDP, because the UNDP ECOSOC resolution was that they would then finance UN organizations—

RJ: Only or virtually only.

NS: But I told Salas that we can't work with UN organizations only. "But you know, in most countries, the UN organizations are not even known. The NGOs are working at the community level, and we need an outreach. So we need to just have available whoever could be our partner." So in fact, that resolution was discussed a lot. I think the Russians and governments like that were very opposed to the NGOs. There were many governments that were opposed to NGOs, but it was part of the resolution for us that we would use any implementing agency with the agreement of government to implement a program.

RJ: Now, was Meechai a figure that entered?

NS: Meechai was a figure in Thailand. I already knew him from before. We thought that Meechai's approach was a good approach. It made contraceptives, especially condoms,

accepted, but most countries were not open to this approach. We sent him to a few countries, but the countries were not willing to adopt that kind of an open approach. So while he himself was very successful and very committed in Thailand, other countries found it culturally unacceptable.

RJ: Too challenging.

NS: Too distasteful, in fact, culturally. You know, he used to have children blowing contraceptive balloons, which used to put many country administrators off.

RJ: But it is this issue of the early 1970s, where many countries were—

NS: Only about eight countries had family planning programs at that time.

RJ: But ten years later—

NS: By 1984, when we came to the population conference in Mexico, every country in the developing world had a family planning program.

RJ: So talk a little bit about that extraordinary change, historically—in ten years, changes which took presumably twenty, thirty, forty years often in industrial countries.

NS: I think that the key to that was the fact that we went there and we were not threatening. We didn't go to a country and say, "Now, you should have this policy," which is what USAID used to do: "You must have a policy to reduce your fertility." We said, "You must understand your population situation." In my dialogue with governments, I used to say, "What is your population?," and they would quote a figure. I said, "No, that is not your population. Your population is this today." They always quoted, I found, the figure that was from a last census or the last set of figures, while in fact it was—

RJ: It was growing rapidly.

NS: It was growing rapidly. And if you were growing at 3 percent, or 4 percent, in so many years your population had increased by that much. They used to get quite shocked: "How

do you know?" "Well, your rate of growth is so much." "Oh." "So how much did you provide for education last year, and how much are you providing this year?" "The same amount, or slightly more." "Well, in that case, you are going backwards." So we did a lot of models like if your population was this, and your economic growth rate was this, so what did you do in the social sectors? It was the same thing that we did in Pakistan—the levels of living of people. How do you measure that? Not just only by income, but access to health, to education, and all the other indicators.

And many countries then started to realize that themselves. In Africa, we worked hard on this because they didn't have any figures. So we first did the African census. Then in the early 1980s, we did the second round of the African census—the 1980s round. That is when a lot of countries changed policies, because in the ten years there was such a huge change in their numbers. They used to start to say to us, "Yes, you were right. That's what it was, and that's what you were saying. But now we see that it is actually so."

Countries like Ethiopia—suddenly they had this huge demand for family planning services which they couldn't meet. They didn't realize where did it come from, because they had had an advocacy and information program but no services. They wouldn't allow services in, but suddenly there was this clamor for services. So countries changed their policies for a whole lot of reasons. Another one was the Demographic Center Training Program, which was started by the UN, actually.

RJ: The UN Population Division.

NS: The Population Division, yes—yes, the demographic centers in Africa, which later UNFPA financed and made much larger. The financing increased. A lot of people that were trained in demography and statistics went on to become ministers of planning in the African

countries in the 1960s, when African countries started to become independent. So there were a whole lot of African ministers who were now ministers of planning, who had gone through the UN demographic and statistical training programs. They were big assets for us. In fact, in one of the programs which we later abandoned, because it was not the most successful—but it had an influence on policy—was to set up population units in planning ministries, to help them understand their population data and situations. They were also supposed to influence demographic connections in all the other departments, which they didn't do. But in the main planning ministry, they did. Many of these planning ministers then went on to become minister of finance and all that. So they already had some background and understanding. So I think that helped us a lot with the family planning and with the population policies in Africa.

In Latin America, the main thrust was reducing the very high levels of abortion. In spite of the Catholic Church and so on, abortion was so high that they really started to introduce family planning as a means to reduce abortion and the high levels of maternal mortality related to abortion. There was a huge maternal mortality problem. A lot of hospital expenditure went to take care of abortion complications. The Chile study, which was one of the first studies in the late 1960s, was that 50 percent or 70 percent—some huge amount—of hospital blood was used for transfusion due to complications of abortion. So much of the antibiotics—so much of the hospital expenditure was for this one area. Then the government decided that these were all unintended, unwanted pregnancies, and it is better to introduce family planning than to try to just make abortion illegal without making the means to prevent pregnancy also available.

Then, in countries like Colombia, which had a very successful family planning program from the early 1960s—before UNFPA came into existence—there the government gave the responsibility for the family planning program to the private sector and to the NGOs. So the

government provided some money and was quite happy for the UN to come and give money through them to the NGO sector, but didn't do anything itself. The whole program was run by the private sector only and basically by the NGOs.

So there were all these examples in Latin America. Later, some of the countries, like Mexico and so on, decided to change, to have fertility reduction also as a goal. But many countries still don't have a fertility decline as their goal. They also invested in social sectors and so on. Brazil was one of the last countries in Latin America to ask for UNFPA assistance. They did because the women's groups were very strong and pushed the minister of health that family planning is a women's health need. Our first program, I think, in Brazil was part of the women's health program to have family planning.

RJ: Which year was this?

NS: I think it was 1982, or something like that. It was quite late. And I remember when I became executive director, one of the things in the first executive board meeting, I suggested that I was thinking about was should we not do more in women's health, in general—not just family planning. Everyone on the board was so opposed to it: "Oh, what do you mean? You are expanding into the health sector." I said, "Well, maybe women's reproductive health." They said, "Nothing like that—family planning and that's it." The UK was one of the most vociferous on this. In fact, the UK was even vociferous before the 1994 conference with my program of action—that I was going in the wrong direction. By the way, Jim read my program of action on a plane.

RJ: Jim Grant?

NS: Jim Grant. He came to a meeting. I remember we were in somebody's office, and he said to me that he was so impressed with it. He said, "I have never read such a wonderful

program." I said, "Jim, you are agreeing with it? I can't believe that you do," because the family planning section had not mentioned any methods.

RJ: You think that was why he—

NS: I think he liked the introduction part of it, which was, I think, quite well-written. I had to go through so much subterfuge to get it written in good, proper language. I said to staff that I was going to edit it myself. Then I hired an editor from the outside. Rockefeller [Foundation] provided the editor. I had to hide in my office, have the editor hide in the conference room to rewrite the document. She did the first part, the introduction, and most of it remains in the final, but governments make so many changes—but the first draft was a very well-written draft. It was very tight and very clear and had simple language. But it was full of what could be done, and how much resources we had. All of these goals were really so doable. The money might sound large, but in the context of the amount that is being spent, it is really nothing—and how much good it could do to the world.

The goals also included goals in education and maternal mortality and child and infant mortality. I had taken all the children's summit goals. Jim was very angry with me in the beginning, but later agreed. Remember? I don't know if you were there. We had set up this intergovernmental committee, and I wanted to make the goals to 2015.

RJ: Yes, I remember only too well.

NS: And UNICEF goals were to 2010. He said, "You can't do that." I said, "But Jim, my thing is for twenty years. So I will take your goals as a starting point for 2010, whatever those are. I won't change those, but I want to make it to 2015."

RJ: I remember this very clearly, yes.

NS: But anyway, finally he did agree. His goals of children, whatever they were, would be the benchmark for 2010 because he wanted another ten-year set of goals. I said, "And then you can use those to make another ten-year set of goals. But for me to have a population and development program, you need to have all these interconnected goals. You can't just have family planning. You have to have, also, women's health and women's rights and education and children's health and so on."

RJ: I want to come tomorrow to the Cairo conference and so forth. But before we leave this, to me, critical period—1974 to 1984—

NS: When all these changes took place. I think we all traveled a lot. We organized many regional consultations and conferences so that people would learn from each other. We set up a population center at Al-Azhar University.

RJ: In Cairo.

NS: In Cairo, to look at Islam and family planning. Al-Azhar was quite progressive and issues many *fatwas*. We organized many regional tours for them—traveling seminars, as we called them—to many Muslim countries to exchange experiences and to talk to other Muslim leaders, especially in the Muslim West African countries. And from North Africa, from Tunisia, and even from Morocco.

RJ: Which were your model countries?

NS: Our good programs at that time were Indonesia, Thailand. Thailand, by the way, didn't start as a program for fertility decline, but then became so. It was to really provide family planning. And we provided one of the first assistants—

RJ: I'm sorry, what was the difference between Thailand's family planning and fertility reduction?

NS: The goal was not fertility reduction. Family planning was a right in health.

RJ: It was a right for individuals.

NS: Yes. But the first program was supported by UNFPA. It was called the Bangkok Municipality Project. The government wanted to try out whether family planning would be accepted by the population and also felt that a UN interpreter would be helpful.

RJ: Was this ahead of Meechai?

NS: Meechai already had his small program by that time, on an Asian-wide or a government involvement. So they asked us to do this Bangkok Municipality Project, and the lines were so long around the block—it was in one of the hospitals—that the government immediately decided that—I think what Meechai was saying was right, that people actually wanted family planning. So they then decided to have a national program as part of their program.

RJ: And in—

NS: Tunisia was one of our very good programs.

RJ: Egypt?

NS: Egypt was an early program. At the beginning it didn't do so well, but by the late 1980s it started to take off. It had all the potential, but the health system was not very efficient. Most of the people in health didn't provide the services. They went into private practice and all that. But the religious leaders were, at the beginning, not so much in favor. Then the government, in fact, itself decided that they needed to redo—they didn't have *madrassas*, but they had these religious training institutions. The mullahs had to get proper education, and I think that changed it a lot.

RJ: I was asking model countries, not necessarily model UNFPA countries, where you would point in the late 1970s, early 1980s, where you would point to an African country, "Go and see what they are doing in Kenya, or—."

NS: We never told them Kenya. We did tell them to go and look at what Tunisia was doing.

RJ: Was there a good African country? Botswana?

NS: No.

RJ: Mauritius didn't count.

NS: Mauritius, yes. We set up a training center in Mauritius for that reason, but Mauritius was a very good country as a demonstration. It was bilingual. It had Catholics as well as other religions. It had NGOs and the government together. So it was quite interesting, even though it was an island country and many African didn't consider it an average African country. But it was a county which had done things in many different innovative ways which could be a model for other countries. So we in fact set up a training center there for a while, to which we sent African—

RJ: Any other Sub-Saharan African country?

NS: At one time we thought that Zimbabwe could be become a model, but then Zimbabwe went a certain way. In fact, we wanted to set up a training program in management of population and public health programs between health and management. But in the end, we didn't do that.

RJ: And in Latin America?

NS: In Latin America, I think Mexico was a very good program. Colombia was a good model because it was a different kind of program. We always sent people to look at Colombia,

how to work with the NGO and private sector. Cuba was a very good program. We had an excellent program in Cuba.

RJ: And Jamaica.

NS: We had a very good program in Chile. Yes, we had an excellent program in Jamaica as well, especially with youth and adolescents. We also set up a training center in the Caribbean, with Dr. Hugh Winter. In Brazil, once we support the national program, then financed a South/South training program outside Sao Paolo, in Las Peñas University, for Portuguese-speaking African countries. Even the Brazilians provided some money for that, for Mozambique, Angola, and so on. Each province is quite different in Brazil. The health system is very complicated. Health services are provided by so many different channels—the private sector, social security, local communities, and by the national government. So to get all of these to work together is not an easy task.

RJ: Now still, looking a this ten years, from 1974 in Bucharest, with hardly any countries with family planning programs—ten years later, where you say most countries had them. Wouldn't you say that was one of the big achievements of the UN?

NS: Oh, we do say that. We say that population and family planning is a huge success story for the UN. To get government to change policy is very difficult, and in a sensitive area where there were so many hang-ups, so many different points of view, so many sensitivities. There were religious sensitivities, social-culture, there was also this North-South suspicion. There were customs, and norms. To have made the change in getting all countries to have a family planning program without imposing anything on them, just by advocacy and demonstrating to them the need. That was quite a big achievement. In so many of these

countries—in Latin America, even in Africa—the Church was a big problem. But in spite of all that, governments did decide to go ahead with the policies.

RJ: At least when I think of the contrast to the heavy-handed conditionality of adjustment—a totally different feel, but also a totally way of looking at it.

NS: I think in our case, we decided that there was no way that we could impose, even with money. One of my things was always that we can't use money to—

RJ: Bribe.

NS: So that is why you will see in our documents, if you ever get to read them, it always says, "And for countries which have the appropriate policies, the countries themselves must make the change." It is only when countries make the change and decide themselves that maybe the policy will—

RJ: Did you ever think of saying to Mr. [Jim] Wolfensohn, or [Michel] Camdessus, "Why don't you try the UNFPA way, which does not try and force countries, but tries to work with countries, share experience?" Or do you think it is so different that it is not—

NS: No, I think they have got themselves so far along this other way, that—I remember in the early years also, the Bank was trying very hard to cooperate with us. I think they wanted us to be like UNDP was to them. There were two programs in the early years—this was in the early 1970s—one in Thailand and one in Indonesia. When the Thailand one was—I am not exactly sure, like parallel financing. The Thai government negotiated it, and we also participated in it. In the Indonesia one, we were going to be channeling our money through a joint program. I was the negotiator from the UNFPA side.

When I looked at the document that was supposed to be ours as well, I had so many problems with it. So I told the Bank, "I am not sure, for one, for example, why would we need

all these contractors—geologists and so on—to look at soil in various parts of Indonesia to decide where to set up a health center. The location of the center, that is not your job. That is for some local person to do." We were spending a few hundred thousand, or half a million dollars, that Indonesia would have to pay back. They said, "No, no, no, it's IDA (International Development Association)." I said, "It doesn't matter whether it's IDA or whether it's whatever. In the end, they have to pay it back, whether they pay it back in fifty years or sixty years. It's not right.

Secondly, I said, "I have great objection to having a project implementation unit,"—they used to call it PIU—"which is going to take all the good people from the main program to direct our project, and therefore leaves the main program with few good people. So our project will be a great success, hopefully, but the whole program will die. So I don't agree with this project implementation unit. That should be abolished and that should be given to the government, or whichever is the implementing agency, but not that we set up something and manage."

The third was something else. There were so many objections. But they said, "Oh, but this is the project, and it's been approved by the board. That's what we are negotiating, and you cannot change it." I said, "Well, then I don't want to be part of it." Salas talked to me and said, "But you can't do this. We should have good relations with the Bank." I said, "I will try." I went to the negotiations. Of course, I couldn't contain myself, so I told the Indonesians, "You ask all these questions." So in the end, they did ask. I briefed them so much. First of all, they said, "No, no, no, we have all agreed on it." I said, "No, you are just throwing away several million dollars of your money. That is not what you should do."

The result of all this was that the Bank and we did not cooperate. We had our separate program, and they set up their project implementation unit. I told Mr. Salas, "The Bank, as much

as we want to cooperate, this is not the way to go about it. It is not to be at the expense of countries." In fact, then McNamara invited me to come and see him. He said, "Tell me what is wrong with our program." I said, "I want to tell you, but I'm not sure that I'll be very popular. You are treating the social sectors like you treat the building of a bridge or something." I said, "The building of a house—yes, you can have target dates and so on. But in family planning, maybe you need to change your program every year. So you can't sort of budget so many contraceptives and it's going to be that amount for five years. You may use much less, or you may use ten times that amount. So you have to be flexible. One area might progress very well and another area may not. The social sectors projects have to be reviewed every year and adjustments to the program made it required. And that's not how the Bank works, therefore your program cannot be a success.

"It is not like I am saying we should have a one-year program. We should have a five-year program, but we should be willing to be flexible whenever it is needed to be flexible and to change the direction of the program." He said, "I see what you are saying." He tried hard to do it, but he was not even able to succeed in the end. They have such rigid rules and such a rigid view, like everyone else is useless, and doesn't know what they are doing, and they are the only ones that know. But I think most developing countries, because of the money, are unable to stand up to them. So they just give in.

RJ: We've got about twenty or thirty minutes. In 1987, you became director of UNFPA. What circumstances led to your appointment as director? What do you remember about the process?

NS: You know, Mr. Salas died rather suddenly. I mean, he was found dead in a hotel room. He had gone to Washington to see the U.S. administration. So it was rather sudden. In

fact, I was in Kenya and got the news there and came back immediately. Mr. [Heino] Wittrin was the deputy-executive-director at that time, and I was assistant-executive-director, even though we were both ASGs.

RJ: He was then acting as director?

NS: Yes. So I told him, "I want to go and see the SG to tell him that I am interested in the executive-director position." He said, "Oh, that would be very"—what was the word that he used, "coarse," or something like that—"to do something like that, and I would not advise it." So I said, "OK, but the SG doesn't really know me. Maybe he doesn't even know who I am. If I want to be executive-director, he should at least know about me." He said, "We should not be seen canvassing for the position." He used some word that made me feel very uncomfortable.

Then after a week I thought about it, and I called Viru Dayal. I asked Dayal, "You know, Viru, I am interested in this. I think I can do this job. Do you think I should come and see the SG?" He said, "What do you mean, 'do you think?' Of course you must. He has to know who you are."

So I told Wittrin that I was going to see the SG. He was very angry with me. Do you know that when I went there, I passed by Viru's office. Viru said, "Well, your colleague has been to see the SG already about ten days ago. You have taken a long time to come." I said, "Which colleague?" Wittrin had been to see him already. Can you believe it? And he was telling me, "No, no, no, it would be very gauche,"—or I don't know what was the word he used, like we were picking off a corpse kind of thing. Salas had hardly died, and here we were canvassing for his job. He somehow conveyed that and I felt quite bad. It wasn't like I was running for his job, but he was dead.

So anyway, I went to see the SG to tell him. Before that, I had been to see [Jean] Ripert, the director-general. He also said, "You must go and see the SG." So I talked to the SG—not very long. The SG asked me my background and so on. I said, "I already saw Mr. Ripert also." He said, "Yes, Mr. Ripert has already talked to me about you." So that had registered.

I tried to get my government to support me, and my government was at that time running General Yahu for the director-general of UNESCO. So they said, "Can't yours be delayed?" I said, "What do you mean, 'can't mine be delayed?' Of course not, mine is now. His is in September." But anyway, the ambassador here went to see the SG. We still didn't have any official instructions. I went to see the SG. Ambassador Shanawaz told Secretary-General Javier, "You know, we have a very good candidate who is interested in being the executive-director of UNFPA." He didn't say, "My government is supporting her," but he registered it. Javier said, "One of the things that I thought was so good of your government was it didn't come and pester me. Your ambassador was so genteel and so nice. He just indicated to me that you were a very good candidate. That impressed me very much."

Little did he know that that the government was wondering what to do now. They wanted me, but on the other hand they wanted the other man more. Then, of course, Maggie Catley Carlson was running for the post, and the Japanese were—Ambassador Taniguchi was here as the ambassador for the economic council. He told the SG, "It must be a Japanese. We are the number one donor," and presented Mr. Konugu as the candidate. The Canadians, of course, launched a huge campaign worldwide. Viru, in fact, told me, "I told the ambassador, 'Please call off your dogs of war and stop bombarding us.'" It was all tenterhooks—so much anticipation.

RJ: How long did this go on?

NS: About several weeks. The SG finally informed me in April, before the ACC (Administrative Committee on Coordination), that he had selected me. He asked me, "When do you think it should be announced?" I said, "I think you must announce it before the next executive board. You must consult with the executive board, but you must announce it before it meets. Otherwise, we won't know who the executive-director is." Javier said to me also, "I think I should announce it before the next ACC." Then he went to Washington the day before he made the announcement. He was addressing some women's group. The women's group was saying, "Well, you must have a woman." He said, "That I can promise you. It will be a woman." So now it was—

RJ: Maggie or you, yes.

NS: I thought to myself, "He can't possibly have Maggie. He can't have a developed country person as the head of UNFPA." He had said, "Why do you think you?" I said, "I think it should be someone from a developing country. I am a woman. It gives me a way to say many things that need to be said that maybe others can't." So I was hoping he was going to remember all this.

The next day, he called me to come and to see him. But he also called Wittrin to come and see him earlier. To Wittrin it was to tell him that he was not getting it, because he was also a candidate. For me, it was to tell me that I was getting it. Then he told me, "I had your predecessor about an hour ago, or two hours ago, and he became ballistic." Apparently he went to Viru Dayal's office and gave him a huge shouting. Dayal said, "Thank God I'm an Indian and you're a Pakistani because short of accusing me of collusion and whatnot, he said everything." He said, "You forget, Mr. Wittrin, that I am from India. If anything, I would be an enemy of a Pakistani lady." He said it was an Asian collusion.

RJ: That doesn't—

NS: He was actually quite mean to me, by the way, at that time. Anyway, when Javier told me that I was going to be executive-director, he said, "You must leave tomorrow for the ACC. I want to announce it at the ACC." I said, "You know, Heino is planning to go to the ACC." So he said, "Well, you are the executive-director. You must come, and you must tell him not to come. Or you can bring him with you if you want to." I said, "Mr. Secretary-General, what you must do is announce my appointment after the ACC. Let him go to the ACC so that he does not feel humiliated. Or you can announce it, but that it will take effect from so-and-so day. Since I still have to work with him, I should be at least gracious enough to let him have his day in the sun as the acting executive-director."

So I really did this favor to Heino—Heino who knew, before he left, that I was the executive-director. He didn't say anything to me. He went off. There in Rome—the meeting was in Rome—everyone was ringing me up and telling Heino, "What do you think of her?," and all that. Then he rang me up and said, "Oh, by the way, congratulations." He was very ungracious.

Then, after that, when he came back, we were preparing the budget for the executive board. So Heino said, "I want to clean up UNFPA, so I don't want you to interfere with me." I said, "I don't know what you are going to clean up, but whatever you want to clean up, I am also a part of that. After all, I am executive-director." I said, "I must use my first opportunity to say what I think I will do and how I am going to act with the executive board." I had some views. I had the views when Salas was there, but whether I could get him to accept them or not. So I said, "Now I am in charge and I will make that point. One of the things I wanted to say was

about staffing. An organization is only as good as its staff is, and we are so small that we need to have very good staff. So I want the support of everyone to ensure that we get this good staff."

I, for my part, was going to pledge that I was not going to hire anyone again who was not in the budget. Everything was going to be very open and transparent. He said, "But I am already doing that." So I said, "What do you mean, you are already doing that? But I am telling you what I am going to say." He was saying to me, "You cannot say this because I am doing it. Then I want to say, 'I have done it.'" You know, Salas had a lot of people on projects. We were trying to clean up that project staff.

Then during the executive board meeting, several of the governments came to see me and said, "What do you want as far as staffing is concerned?" I said, "I think we need to increase our field staff. One of the things I note is that where we have a representative, there the program goes very well. Where we don't have a representative and it is covered from another country, it is very slow. In the beginning, in every major program—in Asia, because the programs started in Asia first—there is a representative. But by the time we came to Africa, then we started—because there were many small countries, so one person covered several countries. And the African countries, even though it is as much work as, let's say, an India even. So we need to have many more representatives in Africa."

They said, "Oh, well, you should then ask us. This is the beginning. You should ask us for what you need and make a good case for it." They said, "Maybe in the next budget you should just ask for all the people you need in Africa." I was quite excited. But Heino got really angry with me. He said, "You cannot interfere. You have no business to." Like he was executive-director and I was still working under him.

RJ: He was very immature too.

NS: Then, he suddenly decided to resign. Without telling me, he went to the Secretary-General and presented his resignation. I didn't even know that he had resigned. Can you believe that? So someone rang me up from the SG's office to say that Mr. Wittrin was resigning. So I called him. He said, "Yes, I cannot get along with this way of working." I said, "And what is this way of working?" It was one week old. "You want to have all this credit." I said, "What credit? I haven't got any credit. I haven't done anything. I haven't said anything to anyone."

This was during the executive board. He suddenly decided to resign so then he could make a speech to the executive board that he had resigned and the reason for his resignation. I said to Heino, "You are resigned from which day." So he said from so-and-so day. I said, "In that case, I will announce that you are resigning from so-and-so day." He said, "But I want to make the announcement." I said, "No, I'm sorry. I will make the announcement that you have resigned. I will say some nice things about you, and then you can say whatever you like. But I don't want you to make the announcement that you have resigned because you don't like me, or whatever it is. That may be your reason, but I can't have the organization subjected to this."

So what he did was at the executive board reception, he told all the members why he was resigning. All the members were coming to me, "Oh, poor you, poor you, starting your career with this bad man." So he got himself into—

RJ: Into trouble. He had been working for UNICEF beforehand.

NS: Yes. But we took him from UNICEF. In fact, there was a very good candidate—a woman from Norway, Karen Stoltenburg. The Nordics were very angry with Salas for taking Heino, because the Germans had obviously put more pressure on him and had promised him a lot of money which they didn't come up with. But collectively, the Nordics were bigger supporters.

But later on, I think later on Heino regretted that he had behaved so badly. He used to ring me up and come and see. I was always courteous with him. But I was really sad that he behaved in this way because I actually didn't do anything to him.

RJ: But it amazes me, the poor judgement.

NS: He tried to make me look bad from the first day. I had hardly become executive-director when he started acting like that. I think he thought that I would be this pushover, that I wouldn't be able to stand up to it. I think many people made that mistake. Then I got Mr. Kunugi as my other deputy-executive-director. He used to go around saying that I was there only for a short time, and he was there to take over.

RJ: Really?

NS: He used to go to the field offices, and the field rep would ring me up: "Dr. Sadik, you are going to leave us after such a short time?" "No, I am not going anywhere. Who told you?" "Mr. Kunugi told us." So I said to Mr. Kunugi, "You are the deputy. You can't go around saying you are going to be executive-director as long as I am there. If my term is up, and you are running, that is something else. But you can't, while I'm executive-director, go around and say that to people." He said, "But it was my understanding that you would leave and I would run the organization. And in any case, that I would be running the organization." I said, "In that case, then you should think of leaving, because then you should run the organization somewhere else—not here." I think he was quite shocked when I told him that.

He used to tell the Japanese the management was so bad. Then the Japanese used to tell me about this management and so on. So I went to Japan and I said, "I am so sorry that you think our management is not so good. I have a deputy who is in charge of management, and he

is not so experienced, so that is why. When he learns, I am sure it will all improve." You have to learn to deal with all these kinds of people. This under-handed business is just too much.

RJ: It is too much. Tarzie Vittachi, was with you in UNFPA for a while, then came to UNICEF. He said to Karl Eric Knudsen and myself, when we were the deputies with him under Jim, "Richard and Karl Eric, you will never know how lucky you are." I said, "Why?" He said, "We're all here together, none of us trying to take over each other's jobs." I remember saying, "But why should we? We all know what our jobs are. We have been working together." He said, "Richard, you have no idea what it can be like." But that wasn't so with Salas beforehand.

NS: No.

RJ: Do you think that was, if I may, because you were a woman that they thought—

NS: No. The Japanese, I think, thought that the post should have gone to them.

RJ: Because they were giving then the largest amount of money.

NS: And countries like the Americans got the UNDP because they were the biggest donors, or UNICEF because they were the biggest donors. So they thought they should have UNFPA. Javier decided that this was the only fund run by someone from a developing country, and he should keep it that way.

RJ: IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural and Development) had an executive-director from—

NS: A developing country. But that was something else. They were the biggest donors, to start with.

RJ: But when you were appointed, you were the—

NS: First woman head of an organization—not of a funding organization, but of any organization. Remember when Viru Dayal was suggested for HCR (UN High Commissioner for

Refugees), there was a huge outcry? He was very hurt. They said that he, a person from a developing country, couldn't fundraise. He said, "The best fundraiser today is Nafis Sadik, and she is from a developing country."

RJ: I didn't remember that. Do you think the UN suffers from not having more balance in the heads of agencies?

NS: Absolutely. I think so. I think that they should be much more open to competence. I don't think that jobs should go to any country, especially a country that when it gets a particular job thinks it's forever—until eternity that that country should have the job. My suggestion to Secretary-General [Boutros] Boutros-Ghali, when in the beginning he was asking us for ideas, when he had first come in, I said, "Since you are here only for one term, I would suggest"—remember he had come for one term only, "you can do anything that you think needs to be done without fear. I would like to suggest that you should first of all say that no P-5—permanent members of the Security Council—should have a senior post that has any influence on Security Council affairs because otherwise they have double power. They have the power of the veto and then they also have the Secretariat. Whatever you might say, the Secretariat does organize."

So the Chinese, the British, the Americans, the French, and the Russians should not have any senior jobs here. In any case, they should not be fixed forever that this is an American post, this is a whatever post, and so on. So I said I would start with that. He said, "You don't want me to be Secretary-General for too long." But I said this also to Kofi [Annan] and he just laughed it all. I think these are all practices which are really not in the UN interest.

RJ: Let me ask you a different one. I am thinking, in part, about why Kofi is so successful in my view, and I presume you agree a lot with that, and thinking about the executive

heads of UN agency. It seems to me it is very difficult to come into the UN cold. Do you agree with that?

NS: I agree with that, totally. I think that people who come in from the outside who have never had any experience of the UN find it very difficult to understand the very complicated structure. For me, when I first came to the UN, I was really at a loss. I knew a lot about those organizations that worked in Pakistan, but how the UN as a system works is not very clear. The whole division between the normative and the research and the standard-setting and the operational is very unclear. Everyone seems to be doing everything. So I think the UN, in the reforms which Kofi has instituted, is in the right direction. But we are not going to be in the development field until we clear the roles and the responsibilities of each of the actors in the normative and in the operational area. Until we do that, I don't think that we are ever going to become a unit.

Secondly, I think that everything should be under one leadership. No one person can control everything, but there must be somewhere where overall policy is set. For example, if now the UN system has the Millennium Development Goals as its system goals, then it must be how the whole system is going to contribute to the goals. This should be reviewed and viewed together, not in the way it is done now—that this is the set of goals and each organizations goes and does it in its own way, and maybe treading into each other's areas. And there is no clear-cut responsibility of what of each one will do and accountability for the results. All the normative agencies are running after project money, and the operational organizations are getting money for a lot of research and analysis and setting standards.

That is why we are not able to compete with the World Bank. We spend a lot more money than the World Bank and have a lot more money and have a lot more resources and

expertise, but we are not able to assemble it together for the service of countries. And the UNDP hasn't been able to do it, in spite of the Secretary-General's—because it's become like a competitor. It has let go its advantage of being the coordinator because it is now going into individual areas of each UN organization. While the successful programs are like UNICEF and UNFPA, and in theory they could all be part of one development program, even as head of UNFPA, while I might agree with the principle, I am not willing to become part of UNDP. It's like a merger with a weak organization. I am happy to be part of UNICEF, but never part of UNDP, for the reason that you need to get UNDP more efficient and more responsive to countries' needs and to set priorities in a proper way, which I think they are incapable of doing. So you know the whole system needs to be redone from scratch. But how you do that from scratch—

RJ: We are going to come tomorrow to the reforms. But perhaps just on the issue of the procedures that an SG should follow for appointing executive heads of agencies, what in the light of your own experience, and what you have seen in the UN in the last—

NS: I suggested a process for my own replacement to the SG in writing, which the SG has accepted. I suggested to him that we develop a profile of the executive head, a job description and qualifications, then ask everyone to send names that they think would be suitable. Then someone in his office goes through a set of criteria—break them down into five or six, and then to see everybody that presented themselves, how they fit those criteria, then to make a short list. The SG, in fact, did that. We had a set of, I think, seven criteria. All the names that came, they were matched. It was a "yes/no" kind of thing—yes this, no that, whatever. Then from that long list, the SG himself made the short list.

I suggested that there should be an interview process in which someone substantive should interview—the Secretary-General himself, the *chef de cabinet*, the deputy. At least four or five people should interview the person. I even, myself, then drafted the questions that should be asked. I made about twenty or so questions. I said each one should select the six or seven questions that they would ask the candidates they interview. So they would ask the same questions—

RJ: Of all the different candidates.

NS: Yes, of all the different candidates and make a comparison amongst them. Then the SG could get all these reviews and then decide on the basis of this interview the answers to the questions and the criteria and so on, then on the interview of the candidate himself or herself, which one he would select. The SG followed this process and I think it worked reasonably well in the end. From my post, there were two candidates in the final list—Thoraya Obai and Tomris Turmen from WHO. She was the second candidate. I think the SG chose Thoraya partly because she was from within UNFPA, so there would be continuity. We were making some organizational rearrangements and so on, so she was quite informed of these. So I think he wanted continuity, and decided to go with her. He could have selected Tomris as well. She was qualified.

So I was quite happy with the process. I think also in the UN there is too much secretiveness. People don't share information. Well, I shared this information with everyone in the executive board. They want to know what was the SG doing. He had not consulted with them. The SG's office said that he would consult with them after he had decided, which was not what they wanted. They wanted to be part of the process.

RJ: The same thing in UNICEF.

NS: They did not have to know the name, but my view was that they should know what the SG was doing. He didn't have to tell them what names he had on the list. He could tell them to send him any names. He was saying to them, "Send me any names," but they didn't know what happened to those names. So in the end, I think the British or someone went to see him. So he gave them my letter that this was the process that he was following—the note I sent.

RJ: It's a pity, in a way, it wasn't done more openly.

NS: It was done openly in the sense that I told the executive board, but not from the SG's office. I think the SG's office should do this in a more open way.

RJ: And I personally think that one could also have the boards asking questions.

NS: The board could ask also questions of the candidate—why not? And the SG could get the view of some board members—at least the executive committee of the board, or whatever it is. I think the whole selection process has to be a more transparent process. I think I made such an issue of this for a whole year that the SG said, "How dare I not follow it?," because every time I asked him, "Are you going to do this?"

RJ: Well, Nafis, thank you very much for today. That is two tapes. We have done a great deal and we will return to it tomorrow.

RJ: This is tape three of Richard Jolly interviewing Dr. Nafis Sadik, and it is now the 21st of May, 2002. Good morning, Nafis.

NS: Good morning.

RJ: I thought you might tell us at the beginning a bit about, or quite a lot about, the Cairo conference, which in so many ways surely was a first for women, and in a sense perhaps for human rights, as well as for issues of population and development. So perhaps you would give

us your overview, and then I might ask you how you came to the views and the leadership that you gave that conference.

NS: The International Conference on Population and Development was held in 1994—I don't remember the dates—in Cairo. The preparatory process, of course, started a couple of years earlier, though not as early as one would have liked, because while it was agreed that there would be a conference, the conference site was still very uncertain. There were several proposals. And also the Secretary-General hadn't thought about whether he was going to appoint a secretary-general, and whether from the inside or from the outside.

In fact, the Population Division, or the Division of Economic and Social Affair (DESA), wanted to have the conference. But Rafiuddin Ahmed was then the under-secretary-general of DESA, and he felt that when people talked about population, they really thought about UNFPA. And the previous conference, the Mexico conference, had had Rafael Salas as the secretary-general. Mr. Ripert, the director-general, also thought that this would be appropriate. So in an internal meeting chaired by the director-general, it was proposed that I should be the secretary-general of the conference. Everyone around then agreed and Ripert was on board. Then they made the proposal to the Secretary-General and he agreed.

It was announced, but you know we had very little resources. Then the whole question of collecting money—because in general it was decided that this conference would not be in New York. It would be somewhere else, and therefore the additional costs had to be raised. There were several countries that offered to host—Egypt, Tunisia, and I think Turkey. There was some discussion about Asia, because Asia had never had a conference. But I think people were generally leaning towards Africa, and Cairo was a good place. It was both Arab, and it was

African, and so on. So the usual missions went to look at facilities, and it was agreed that Cairo would be the venue.

At the same time this was announced, the Rio conference (UN Conference on Environment and Development) was being prepared. There was a big controversy in the preparatory process over whether population and demographic issues had a place in environmental and developmental issues. In the beginning, even though many developing countries, interestingly enough, said that we need to consider numbers and distribution and rates of growth, et cetera, in relation to environmental issues, it was not in the first outlines of the program of action. A lot of work had to be done behind the scenes to get population issues into the environment.

RJ: Why was it being kept out of Rio?

NS: Because, again, of the same controversies. There were several governments, including—I know Argentina was very much in the lead on this. Their view was that the world had been created by God for the use of human kind. They in fact said that, and that everything was in the service of humankind, or man. Therefore, to think about reducing numbers or having a balance just did not arise because God had somehow created the earth.

RJ: But it was very much the Catholic position.

NS: It was a Catholic position, but they did not put it as a Catholic position. But, in fact, the Vatican and others also linked up with it. The whole usual story—there were people who were against family planning as such. Several of the women's groups also joined this. By this time, many women's groups were starting to say that family programs were coercive in that they didn't actually—that they were top-down, imposed on women, and they were directed at women somehow, and they didn't look after the concerns of women. But you know, they were quite

active. Many of these women's groups didn't want family planning. I think the idea was evolving that it should be somehow women's health and women's concerns, though they didn't talk about women's health in general. I think that was the idea.

So I think they also had an input, but eventually population did get into the agenda. But the chapter on demographics didn't make recommendations because by this time the population conference had also been decided upon. So the way out was that these would be discussed and decided at the population conference. So there was a general description of the interrelationship and what effect it could have and so on, but no recommendations as such in Rio.

RJ: In retrospect, was that, in your view, a mistake of Rio? Or do you think, in retrospect, that was a perfectly reasonable—

NS: I think that they should have had some recommendations. I think they gave in, in a way, to the conservative and the Catholic groups. You know, I can't even fault them too much because there were so many controversial issues anyway. The environment itself was very controversial. So I think it was not the responsibility of the secretariat. It was, in the end, the governments that decided they could only deal with so many issues. And there were so many, many issues that were so controversial. So the fact that we had a chapter—I think chapter five, or whatever—on demographic issues, and it said in the end, I don't remember the exact language, but "these will be dealt with and policies and programs will come out of the International Conference on Population and Development."

RJ: Did Maurice Strong or Nitin Desai take a particular position on this issue?

NS: I think Nitin was very—his view is that these are intergovernmental conferences, and they should make the decision. I don't think he had any particular view. Maurice Strong, I think, had a view that population should be included, but in the beginning I don't think he

pushed it. But later he became quite convinced that there should be at least a chapter discussing these issues, even if it did not make any recommendations. So he did come around to having the inclusion of demographic issues.

So it was quite interesting, the Rio conference. All my effort was how to get points scored on the conservatives as to why demographic issues were important. And they were important in the context of individual lives and needs, rather than just sort of some overall global issue of resources. Somehow it became, like if you were consumption-oriented, then you shouldn't care about environment. But even if you were not consumption-oriented, you still had to care about the environment because it was something that affected individuals.

I made a thesis in my speeches to the preparatory process that, right or wrong, one billion of the richest are a problem for pollution because they over-consume and not because they have needs. And one billion of the poorest also had problems looking after their resource base and the environment, only because they had a need to survive. I think most people in rural areas know the importance of the natural resources, but in spite of knowing that this is their livelihood and their basis for survival, they still destroy them because in the immediate either they will perish and die, therefore they cut down trees, et cetera.

So in a sense, we really needed to look after the one billion poorest, and we needed to think about—at that time—the three and a half million, or whatever, in the middle who wanted to be like the one billion rich. But we needed to look at the needs of the one billion poorest, and we needed to think of a new development paradigm, which didn't hold up this one billion over-consuming model as the model for the world. They were condemning China—not condemning, but singling out China, and India. If they had so many refrigerators, how terrible, and all that.

RJ: And cars.

NS: Yes, correct. But the model that they are following is the model of the developed countries, and with technology and so on. I think the Swedes were very impressed with my presented theory, but it was just a way of presenting. In the one billion needs, it was also the need for health, for education, for access to opportunities, especially for women. You know, I brought in the population or the family planning or the health rights issue under that set of goals of alleviating poverty. I didn't talk about alleviating poverty, but the needs of the one billion.

RJ: Does UNFPA produce any—

NS: We had a *State of the World's Population* on population and environment.

RJ: This was the 1992 one.

NS: Yes. I think that also—I'm not sure whether I developed this idea of one billion poor and one billion rich, and the three in between. I think some of it is reflected in that statement.

RJ: If I can ask one related question, I often feel that people in the industrial countries are almost unaware, and certainly talk as if they are unaware, of the impact of their own consumption and how much that bigger an impact that makes on global resources.

NS: It has become like a *cliché* in the UN system. You know, when you talk about demographic issues, you also talk about over-consumption. When you talk about environmental protection, you also—just like the *pro forma* mention of over-consumption. I remember giving some speeches in the Nordic countries and saying that the one billion rich people, and their role in protecting the environment, has to be in the same way as we dealt with family planning. It is to promote behavior change on a mass scale. That needs an effort, it needs a strategy, it needs an approach, and then it needs implementation of those strategies.

I said the same thing that we do to help people understand why this behavior is better, or these actions are better, are required in the western countries. This should be in school systems, it should be in the non-formal sector, it should be in the media, and it should be supported by studies which show how whatever they do leads to environmental degradation, over-consumption of energy—there are so many—over-consumption of food, which in fact is having an effect on their health and so on.

That was not business, in a sense, so I made the points and I was thinking that if there were someone truly interested in the environment, they should take this as one of their missions, to get behavior change in the western countries. I tried to sell it, actually, to some of the environmental groups. I said, "You know, it is not my job. I have got a job which I am focusing on, but as I think of the environmental issues I think this is what needs to be done. So there should be some people from developed countries that should take this on as a more intellectual effort, not as seen by some extreme group—because we also have those who say 'no development,' and 'stop everything,' and then they are not heard—but in a very rational way, and make the case." But somehow there no voices that have risen that can make these points and get themselves heard in the industrialized countries.

It is not my subject, but I agree that over-consumption is just mentioned in a *pro forma* way. In UN conferences also, there is not a set of recommendations that must be implemented by this group of countries to help with environmental issues. Generally, the recommendations that they must develop technology so that those that are developing can use better technology and pay for it, or pay for the costs of past mistakes, but not what they should do today, and in the future, and have some goals that they should aspire to achieve by making some behavior changes. I mean, this really needs behavior change. Even things like overuse of water, overuse

of energy, leaving televisions and lights on, et cetera—all this, if you take it on a several billion people scale, it will help a lot. It will help a lot more than putting down developing countries.

RJ: And putting down population.

NS: Yes.

RJ: Let me now bring you back to the Cairo conference. You were dealing with the run-up process. When and where did the strong emphasis on human rights, women's choice, come in?

NS: It came about during the process. It wasn't like I started with these ideas. I had always had this idea of linking women's rights with family planning, but to broaden the whole subject from family planning to reproductive health and make it into a rights approach evolved. The Swedes always used to ask me—the preparatory process was from 1992 to 1994, basically—they asked me right in the beginning, "So what will be the objective of your conference? What sort of phrases will describe what you want as an outcome?" I am sure that at the beginning I must have made sentences, or paragraphs, but gradually, as I started to think about it, I started to feel that this should be more of an individual needs and rights approach.

Population issues were like the needs of the whole nation or the whole community. The programs were directed at individual women, but the perspective of the individual, particularly of women, was not what drove the program strategies, but in fact the other way around. That time, you know, when we were looking at lots of studies and so on, in preparation for the conference—the recent surveys, the demographic and fertility surveys, showed this big gap between the desired family size and the actual family size. Mostly the gap was women.

RJ: Three hundred million, was it at the time?

NS: Three hundred million women had no access. But even in the countries where there was access, these were just global surveys of countries—how many children did women desire? Women might say or three or four or sometimes two, but never did they six, or eight, or whatever they had. So it was always a gap between what they would have liked to have had and what they actually had. And then you ask them why did they have so many, and it was lack of access, or even if they knew there were services, they couldn't get to it. In many African countries they used to reply that it was too far away and they didn't have time, or most quoted was that it was not for them to make that decision.

So that is how it started to emerge. It shouldn't be a top-down approach. It should be an individual needs approach. I started to develop the thesis that the individual need—in fact, if we responded to it, and catered to it, and provided it, then it would take care of the national goals, perhaps even in a shorter space of time. And John Bongaarts did some modeling, I think, on this gap—desired and actual size. Steve Sinding, in the Rockefeller Foundation, also did some work on this.

It was idealistic to think that you would get to the desired family size, but if you could, by having everything in place and removing all the obstacles, then you could achieve the fertility goals that we were all talking about—population stabilization—in a much shorter period of time. So that is how it started to evolve. So then how to make the links between all the constraints that women, in particular, faced in practicing what they wanted to practice, or doing what they wanted to do, and making it happen? Then we developed all these ideas of women's rights and so on.

But I am getting in advance of myself, because actually it was not just me. It was many, many people, because in the beginning, in 1992 when we started the preparatory process, we

were not going to have an NGO conference. In Mexico there was no NGO conference because the government didn't want an NGO conference, and Mr. Salas decided that it was not—

RJ: But there had been one in Bucharest.

NS: Yes, in Bucharest there had been an NGO conference. But in Mexico, there was no NGO conference. I am not absolutely certain, but I think partly also because the U.S. position was a little bit uncertain. The Mexicans were worried about the Catholic groups, because they have separation between the church and state, and they were very strong on their family planning and women's rights programs. And they didn't want this to be somehow disturbed. For whatever reasons, there was no NGO conference.

So when we started, I started also with the assumption that there would be no NGO conference. Then, I think after the Rio conference, the MacArthur Foundation asked me again about an NGO conference. I said, I didn't have any money and no plans. I really didn't have the resources to organize it. So anyway, they invited me to a meeting with a lot of NGOs, and many other foundations, to discuss this. I gave them the reasons again. We also discussed the content of the conference, and I was just exchanging some ideas with them. I had not yet even made an outline of the content of the program of action for the governments here.

They were very keen on the NGO conference, so I said I would go back and think about it. But there were two conditions. One was that they had to raise the extra resources for the NGO part of the conference. I would help in whatever way that I could. Secondly, they would have to set up their own secretariat and manage it all themselves. I would try to get one or two people in our secretariat from some governments to be the liaison, but they would do all the organization and the management. We would help them with finding the place and so on.

RJ: This approach of yours—was that more tactical, though? You would presumably have really welcomed the idea of a strong NGO meeting.

NS: Well, at that time I wasn't sure. I was still thinking about Mexico and why we did not have one. In Bucharest, the two conferences were very parallel. In the NGO conference, it was like population was not important. You did everything else in development. That was Mr. Rockefeller's thesis, which was very much condemned by the population group. And in the conference itself there were lots of different views, but it was that fertility had to be reduced in order for poorer countries to develop. So it was two different approaches.

But I think in Bucharest there was a very good exchange, in my opinion. But the NGO conference didn't contribute to the main conference. It was sort of held in a distance. So it seemed like there were two parallel conferences. When I discussed with the NGOs and the MacArthur Foundation, I said the whole purpose of having a parallel NGO conference must be to contribute to the main conference.

RJ: To add value.

NS: To add value, not just for you to have a place to speak. They can organize that themselves. To have it under the UN conference umbrella, there must be some relationship between the two conferences.

RJ: But surely, the NGO conference in 1994 was seen—

NS: But we are now getting ahead.

RJ: But I am talking about prospective—surely, many people thought a strong NGO conference, particularly within the American context, would ensure that the government position was not so negative.

NS: No. At that time, the government position was already positive. In 1992, Clinton was in. So they were already very much on board now. The Americans, in fact, were very helpful for the Cairo conference. So it was not that, it was that NGO views were from one extreme to the other extreme. And there were so many organizations that were interested in population issues—all the environmental groups, all the population family planning groups, all the women's health groups, all the women's rights groups and, of course, many religious groups. So there was such a wide spectrum.

I first started to listen. I said, "All the NGOs must have a discussion, and you make your suggestions on what I should think about in the document." In the first meeting, I thought to myself, "I am not sure I am ever going to get this organized." So it was now how to get a common platform that everyone would contribute to. It came gradually, but it took a while. First I organized a whole set of expert meetings on several topics that we selected that we thought were of importance—like on aging, women's rights, and women's and adolescent health. I invited several NGOs to the meetings as well—I mean, who were experts, who were technical people. They were held in all the different regions—or five regions. I think we had five technical conferences. They were all financed by different governments.

I traveled I don't know how much—to all countries of the world. In every country I met with NGOs. We organized also all the regional meetings then—ESCAP and so on. Now at all the previous conferences, everything was like parallel. The main document that was being prepared was done, while the regional meetings were done after or doing—maybe one before. I decided that all of these—like the technical meetings, the expert groups meetings, the regional conferences—must all be done before I start on the main document. I said, "This whole thing of having parallel things—we are not having five conferences. We are having one conference and

one set of recommendations, so no one should be able to say that their views didn't get consideration."

The staff said, "Oh, this can't be done." I said, "No way am I going to start on anything. Even if I started in my head—but I am not going to start the process with governments, et cetera, until this is all done." So we did all these conferences in the one year and two months, or something like that, of 1992 and early 1993. I think the last one was January or February of 1993. At every regional conference I decided also to have an NGO conference. One of the things that I said to the NGOs was that I do not want only these NGOs from Europe, and particularly from the U.S. When we say NGOs reflect the voice of those that can't be heard, I really mean that those voices should be brought somehow to the UN. You are not the surrogates for them. They must be able to speak for themselves.

They all agreed, but of course they think that each NGO thinks he or she speaks for everyone in the world. I said, "No. All the countries should identify NGOs. I don't think we can get every country in, but at least we will have a large number of country NGOs reflected at the meetings." For example, in the Africa meetings, for the first time ever many African NGOs had come to a UN conference. I said, "They should select the group of women"—there were lots of women—"the group of individuals who should represent them at the global NGO conference." And I said, "They must participate throughout the preparatory process. Otherwise, there is no point in having an NGO conference which does things all by itself. The NGO conference," I said, "must be really an input all the time to the main conference."

So I think all that helped a lot. I mean, it was really quite inclusive in the sense that we then got a lot of new organizations from developing countries. And their voices were really heard.

RJ: Was there any real opposition to that?

NS: No, I don't think so. I think it is quite—

RJ: Logical.

NS: Logical, isn't it?

RJ: It is still a bit of contrast with other—

NS: It was a big contrast. I think those that might have had some difficulty with it, or felt that they represented everyone, couldn't really object. For me, I was quite strong in my views on this. And also I managed to get governments to support those. I got money from several donors, like some of the Nordics and the Swiss, for NGO delegates from developing countries to be able to participate in the regional. And then later, I had an actual brainwave. I got money from the Swiss, and I think the Dutch maybe. Would they be willing to finance—in their letter they should say that this is for the participation of NGOs at the conference if they were members of the government delegation.

So when governments found that an NGO would be paid for, they didn't object. So a hundred government delegations at Cairo had an NGO on their delegation. These NGO delegates were absolutely fantastic. They had already gone through this whole process. Many of them were new, but they had participated for two years in the preparatory process. So they knew the document inside out and so on.

RJ: Some surely must have said, perhaps from the industrial countries, "This is a way to get the NGOs dominated by government officialdom."

NS: No, nobody said that. I think I just asked orally, and the Swiss said, "That's a good idea." By this time in the preparatory process it was very obvious that the NGO voices were the

true voices. They wouldn't let a government say, "In my country, this doesn't happen." Some NGO would get up and say, "It does happen."

Then we made an outline of what would be the chapters in the program of action. I had a meeting with each of the regional groups, and then with all the membership, to discuss this. Nobody had great discussion. There was a huge amount of discussion, by the way, on the title of the conference. It was International Conference on Population and Development in the end. We started with Population and Sustainable Development, and all the developing countries—or many of the developing countries—said, "No, no, not at all. This is just a surrogate for environment. That is happening in Rio." Sustainable development was now a surrogate for environment. I said, "No, sustainable development is development that can be sustained. So how about Sustainable and Sustained Development?" But no, this was rejected.

It was quite interesting that the Rio process was on, and I just made the proposal Conference on Population and Sustainable Development. I wanted development in the title. I thought sustainable seemed right. "Oh, no," they said, "no way." Then I tried the idea of Sustainable and Sustained Development, that sustained means that we must make every effort that it doesn't disappear and so on. "Oh, no," they said, "we just want development." In the end, the developed countries were keyed on sustainable and then gave in. So it was agreed.

Actually, we had a lot of fun in the preparatory process with governments and all of us, the secretariat, in these discussions. The first outline there was not much discussion. Then we made an annotated outline of what would be the topics covered. In the discussions I elaborated on it, but I wanted each chapter to start with the facts as they were. The facts on, let's say, health were so much, maternal mortality so much, and this and that. Then I would have a set of

objectives that we wanted to achieve. I was thinking of a twenty-year time period. Then we would have the recommendations that would help us to achieve those objectives.

So on the facts, I said, "You can have no disagreement, because those are facts. If you accept that the facts should be in the documents, then it is taken for granted that the objectives should deal with the facts. Then you can decide whether the objectives as we have suggested are realistic or not, or whether we should set goals or not." There was a huge amount of discussion on whether we should have goals. The Swedes were generally very opposed to goals. I said, "Let's leave it for now, whether we have it or not. Let's just have this annotation as an approach. Then we can discuss the issue of goals later." So everyone agreed that—

RJ: Who were the other people against goals?

NS: Several others. There was no great opposition, but the Swedes were very opposed because, they said, "Goals serve no purpose. They just made us feel good. Actually, we should just do and have some criteria for measuring progress, rather than set ourselves goals because goals are never achieved. Governments just felt good about these." I think several others then joined. It was not very acrimonious, but they were very fixed on not having goals. They said this was like targets. It was not targets, but I can understand targets. I think maybe I had targets as the word first and maybe later changed it to goals.

RJ: There was a view, if I remember, that some of the goals, at least, should be taken at the Copenhagen conference (World Summit on Social Development).

NS: That was not the reason. They felt that governments always agreed to these, and then we never achieved them. Then we look bad outside. So I said, "Maybe we should try to have realistic goals, and maybe most of these goals are achievable if we really set our minds to it." So in the first instance, there was this discussion. I don't know how many meetings with

how many groups, and groups, and groups of countries on just these things. Then I had one more presentation of something—not an annotation. Maybe it was—

RJ: Not the financial needs.

NS: No, financial I did much later. In the meantime, I had set up a team with all the agencies. I think we had twenty agencies in it. We set them some tasks like what goals we should have. By this time, I had sort of evolved this idea of the individual needs and rights approach. You know, the deputy-secretary-general of the conference was Joe Chami, the director of the UN Population Division. They were responsible for the actual writing of the document. We had I don't know how many meetings and how many discussions, because they are very UN-ese. And I am totally un-UN-ese.

I think we started now to write the document. The first chapter was very demographic—numbers and this, that. There was no sense of making a change in the situation of those that really needed our attention—the poor and the vulnerable and all that. It didn't somehow come out. So the first draft was very much like a Mexico conference draft. Between us, I was very unhappy. I wasn't quite sure now how to tell this group that was working on it that this was—

RJ: Unacceptable.

NS: Totally unacceptable. So I said, "Should we not have it reviewed by some external group of experts who know the UN and who know the subject?" I asked the Rockefeller Foundation to finance a meeting. Steve Sinding was there and he agreed readily. So we invited to this meeting I think about ten or twelve people, including Halver Gille and Dirk van de Ka and other quite eminent people like John Bongaarts. I said to them—Joe was with me, and I said to these people—"Now you say whatever you think. If you think it is a horrible document, don't

worry about my feelings. I will not be hurt." I said, "We want an absolute frank discussion because we want a very good document. Joe, you agree?" Yes, Joe agreed.

So they looked at each other and they weren't sure. So Dirk said, "You really, Nafis, want us to say what we think?" I said, "Yes, please." He said, "You know, this is a dead document. It is dead on arrival." He was so good in lambasting it. Then the other also—you know, it depends on how the stage is set. Now everyone found fault with it.

We spent a whole day on this document. They made some very excellent points: we had done so much in the population field, it doesn't come out; and how we had done it does not come out. It is so mundane that it is like nothing exciting has happened, and in fact we had done many exciting things. They made it more exciting even than I thought we could make it.

I was very happy. We went back, and I said, "We have to throw out this way that it has come out." Oh—when I told you how I was going to present the thing, that came after that expert group meeting. Before that, the annotation was in fact the content. But I didn't exactly how I was going to law out the document. That idea of the facts and the objectives and the recommendations—that came to us after this meeting. To start with, the first chapter, the introduction, should say where we are and set the stage of what else needs to be done. So it was positive, and yet there was so much left to be done, and why, and how it was going to be done.

Anyway, we set about a whole new approach. I think the first drafts then were coming out better. I have this idea of having a section on reproductive health as an overarching approach to family planning also. But in the end, it was also decided that we would have a section on fertility and family planning, even though reproductive health was dealt with in the section on health. Now to get a definition of reproductive health, I asked WHO to give us a clear definition

of reproductive health. Came a reply which was very interesting, which was a definition, including abortion. What did it say? What was the word they used?

RJ: Terminating pregnancy?

NS: Something—terminating pregnancy. I called the WHO. I called Director-General [Hiroshi] Nakajima, in fact. I said, "WHO stands by this definition?" So he said, "We are the technical agency. Yes, this was the definition." I said, "Well, this may have some repercussions. I don't know. It's your thing, and I am going to say that WHO has sent me this definition. I would have included it, but not in this way. What I am saying about abortion in the document is that unsafe abortion is a major public health problem for the reproductive health of women and that it has to be addressed. Even I am not suggesting that—."

They said, "Oh, but reproductive health includes the means to terminate pregnancy." I said, "Yes, it does. But only in those countries where it is legal. So some clarification should be—maybe an asterisk saying, 'In countries where it is legal.'" But they didn't want it. There was a huge thing on this, and finally the whole paragraph on reproductive health I did myself because I couldn't get anything.

RJ: So in the end, you used the WHO definition?

NS: No, we couldn't use that WHO definition. But you know, I think the Vatican always remembered that. That is why they always say that reproductive health is a way to get abortion legalized, or abortion included. My response, truthfully, is that it is not. It is very clear that you can only do it in countries where it is legal, and even the UN cannot prevent countries where it is legal from providing it.

RJ: Why is it that WHO doesn't seem to have had the same American attack, let alone the Vatican attack?

NS: Because they have never been very forthright on these issues. The WHO then was going to do a special report on reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health for the conference. They were going to present it to the World Health Assembly in March of 1993 to have it approved. So then that would be a document for us to use for the rest of the conference. By this time, they had not sent it in 1993. So they were now presenting it in March 1994, by which time the ICPD prepcom had met. There had been this big discussion on the WHO. So the WHO decided to withdraw that document and did not even present it because the subject of reproductive health had become controversial.

Dr. Nakajima, in fact, rang me up and said, "You are putting me in a lot of trouble. Malta has come to see me, and the Vatican has come to see me, and several Catholic countries. You are getting me into a lot of trouble." I said, "Dr. Nakajima, if you like, we will send some people down from UNFPA to help you with the delegations, because the Cairo document is not suggesting any such thing as legalizing abortion. All it is saying is that abortion cannot be swept under the carpet." I said, "I have had a hard time with my own secretariat getting it. But I am not about to take it off. If you say there are forty to fifty million abortions, no woman wants to have those abortions. Seventy thousand deaths from abortions—it's a huge problem. Seventy thousand of the 550,000 deaths are due to unsafe abortion. And we don't even know whether that's the correct figure."

So I said, "This is a huge problem. How do we get rid of it? No woman wants to have an abortion. So we have to prevent that." "Well, then she doesn't have to have an abortion." I said, "Well, she has the abortion because she feels that she has no other way. She cannot support that child, so it is an unintended pregnancy. It is an unwanted pregnancy. It is a pregnancy

thrust upon her for whatever reason. So we have to deal with those causes." So that is how it became a huge debate.

People kept saying why was I being so difficult on unsafe abortion. I said, "If you want to take out unsafe abortion—you are free to. Your governments can take it out. But then I insist that you also change the objective of this section, which is to promote maternal health and to reduce maternal mortality." I said, "If you are against it, then you will eliminate the paragraph on unsafe abortion. You have to say, 'And those women who do not follow the teachings of somebody or the other must be condemned to death.'" Monsignor MacDermott, the Vatican rep, said, "Oh, no! That's not what we are saying." I said, "That is exactly what you are saying. So I insist."

And I said it from the podium. I said, "Those that say, 'Just eliminate it, and improve maternal health and maternal mortality,' must deal with the fact that they are, in fact, against women's health." I can also become quite emotional. In the end, it stayed. In the conference document, it was one of the paragraphs that was in brackets. And Nick Biezma of the Netherlands, who was the chair of the preparatory committee, finally managed to send it out.

But anyway, the preparatory process—the NGOs by this time had several drafts. I asked all the NGOs to send me whatever recommendations on whatever topics, except to make them very short recommendations. And some of these may find reflected in my document, as outspoken as they wanted. But I said, "I am not going to suggest legalization of abortion, and I am not going into sexuality issues." They asked me, "What is your personal view?" I said, "It has nothing to do with my personal views. It has to do with what I can get through, and what the needs of people as I see it—of women particularly in most of the world—are today. And today, women need to have access to basic health. Their mortality must be reduced. Their status must

be improved—in nutrition and access to control and so on. If I get that in and have the subject of unsafe abortion in—if I get things like traditional practices in, which none of these we have had before, if I get male responsibility in," I said, "I will be very happy. I don't want all these things that I think I can get through all thrown out because they are against legalization of abortion. They will take the one issue and throw out—"

RJ: Everything else.

NS: Everything else. I said, "So one must be strategic. While I would like to be idealistic and say, 'Without this, women cannot have true control over their health,' but I have to be very realistic." So I said, "With these two caveats, you can give me any recommendations. And I will see what can be put in." I even left recommendations like circumcisions are against human rights. I said, "I don't want to take on to religions—three religions."

RJ: Is this the moment to ask about your visit to His Holiness, the pope?

NS: Yes. The preparatory process, then—the NGOs sent me a lot of recommendations. I really read every single one. I mean, I had mountains of paper on my desk. Some of the language was really good. I said to many of them when I addressed NGO groups, "Many of you may recognize the language"—I remember a few of them saying, "That's ours. You see, that phrase"—just to make them know I had read them. Otherwise, how would they know I had read any of their submissions?

Anyway, during the process I started to also talk to the Holy See rep in New York. I was thinking of how I could get the Vatican on board. So we decided that maybe a way to do it was that in the section on family planning not to mention any contraceptive methods. I had a discussion with the Holy See reps. They had sent a number of people from Rome to have a discussion with me. I went armed with all the speeches of the pope and other papers on the

Catholic Church and contraception. They had a couple of lunches for me here. Cardinal McHugh was very much—he has died since then—and Cardinal MacDermott, who was really nice. He was the head of the delegation to Cairo. And of course, Martino and so on.

They kept trying to tell me that the Church, the Holy Father, is against family planning. I said, "No, the pope is not against family planning because he supports natural family planning. I have a speech here." His reps said that the Church was opposed to family planning, period. I said, "No, he said this in his speech that we have." Then they said, "Oh, that was for a higher purpose." What was the higher purpose? It was to preserve the sanctity of marriage and to preserve the health. I said, "Well, to preserve the health—well, what about AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), for example?" They said condoms increased the likelihood of infection—of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and sexually transmitted disease infection. I said, "That's not true. I can understand a position in which you say that the sexual act is only for procreation. But if you can say that you can plan a family by natural methods, then why against modern scientific methods? You are controlling births. And you can have it for pleasure then. It is not for procreation because if you have the sexual act when you are not likely to be pregnant. To me, it doesn't make sense that you would be opposed to modern methods. It is just the method then that seems to be the problem."

I said, "If you break your leg,"—actually, the pope had,—"you wouldn't say 'natural methods.' You would say go to the doctor, got to a hospital to have it fixed. We prosper. We modernize. And all of that comes from God as well." But nothing moved them. So anyway, I said, "I accept that you propose natural family planning or abstinence. And many people maybe also in the world believe that. It is the method that should be the choice."

So I came up with this formulation that everyone should have information and have access to the means. But the decision on whether to use, what to use, and when to use should be left to the individual. And if the individual chooses a natural method—

RJ: Did they go along with this in the end?

NS: I thought that they were going along with it. I also said to them, "You know, the world is not all Catholic. Secondly, we are talking about individual choice. So you can't dictate that." I said, "To me, it is as coercive to deny people information and access—especially poor people—as it is, which you condemn, forced sterilization, which we also condemn. So forcing someone to use a method is coercive, but denying people, to me, is equally coercive." "Oh, no"—they were teaching to show people the light.

I thought that from these discussions, it seemed to me, and to my colleagues, that maybe the Church was not going to be so opposed. I finally went to Rome to have a meeting with the pope. This was in March of 1994, just before the first prepcom, with our UN Programme of Action, our *Magna Carta* document. By this time, I had even got the goals in, because we had had one other preliminary discussion on the outline. In the middle of the discussion of the prepcom, I made this impassioned speech: "And we must reduce maternal mortality. Now who can be against reducing maternal mortality by 50 percent, doable by the year so-and-so?" So I got the targets, or goals, and the quantitative numbers in. "UNICEF has already done this in the year 2000. We are just extending it with UNICEF to the year 2015." This group had come up with many good goals on education and so on. Nobody said a word. It was added to the document.

So anyway, I went to Rome to see the pope. Just before the meeting—like one hour before—Monsignor MacDermott calls me and says that he wanted to see me before I met the

pope. So he came, and he looked a little bit agitated. I was wondering why. He said, "Don't be upset if the Holy Father says this or that." But still, I didn't think that they were opposed to the document. Somehow, all the discussions here in New York the Holy See had participated in. They didn't seem to be so averse to the approaches. I had gone through many, many dialogues with all the governments here at every stage of the preparatory process, except for the final document, which then came out in March. That was when I went to see the pope.

So I went to see the pope. It was to be a one-to-one discussion. There were to be no aids. And there was to be no press release. So I went in, and the pope was really not—you could see that he was not very happy. He started by asking me did I know that this was the year of the family. To him it seemed like this was the year of the disintegration of the family. I thought he had mixed up the year of the family with the population and development conference. I said, "I am the secretary-general of the International Conference on Population and Development." He said, "Yes, I know. So why have you taken this different approach to your predecessors?"

I thought I hadn't really taken such a different approach. What is so different about my approach? I said, "No, not really, except that I have moved from a top-down demographic approach—and this has evolved in the two years of the preparatory process with NGOs and expert group meetings—to an individual needs approach." He said, "That is what I mean. There is no such thing as individual needs and rights in this. It is couples' needs." So that is how the discussion started. Then I said, "Couples' needs implies the two member couple is equal. But in most of the countries of the developing world, women are not equal. They don't have the possibility, the capacity to make choices and decisions for themselves. And they are the ones who suffer the consequences of pregnancy. They become ill. They die. They are overburdened with all kinds of responsibilities."

His response to that was that women can do what they like if they really choose to do it. I started to explain how women got pregnant and so on. His response was actually, "The irresponsible behavior of men is caused by women, don't you think?" I said, "Certainly I don't agree with you." I asked how many Catholics were there in the world. He got very upset. By this time, he was, I think, very angry with me because I wasn't agreeing with him. He said, "I don't know. How many Muslims are there?" I said, "Well, I think about 1.2 billion Muslims." He said, "The same number of Catholics." I said, "The objective of my question was not really the numbers. It was really how many of those do you think follow your teaching on family planning?"

He said, "They all do, except those materialistic societies of North America and Europe." I said, "But I have to disagree with that. Do you know that the highest number of abortions are in Latin America—the Catholic countries—and in the Philippines? They have a very high incidence of abortion. In fact, many of our programs are to help these countries reduce the incidence of abortion. They started with high levels of abortion, and by introducing contraceptive services as, I suppose, the lesser evil of the two—to help prevent abortion because so many women are dying of abortions." He said, "No, all these countries must follow the natural, the moral, and the spiritual laws."

So he was really not willing to accept. I pointed out that the section on family planning, we are not suggesting that everyone have use of contraceptives, but that everyone should have the information and access. But the decision should be made by the individual. Governments shouldn't impose it. A program shouldn't impose decisions. And if the individual believes that natural methods are the only way, then that is what they should do. But that is their choice. We can't impose our choices.

He said, "But the UN must set a moral example. It must be the leader." I said, "But the UN speaks to all religions. As far as we are concerned, the UN can only recommend about what is scientifically possible." I won't tell you the whole discussion, but it was not very pleasant. I was quite upset because I was really quite optimistic. I thought the Vatican could come on board with this formulation.

RJ: Was he in any way aware that you had been to a convent in your early—

NS: Yes, very much. He said something about, "Who do you think does more development work and more for the poor than Catholic organizations?" I said, "Yes, I know. I went to Catholic school." He said, "Yes, I know you went to a Catholic school." So he knew everything about me. He was quite well-informed.

RJ: Were there any things that came out of the meeting that were positive for the conference?

NS: Nothing. In the conference itself, some things came out that were positive, even with the Church. This whole issue of contraceptives and all became a big debate in the preparatory process. The first preparatory process was in March after this. The Vatican and a few countries—Malta, Nicaragua, and I think Libya and Sudan and sometimes Benin—were holding up a lot of the discussions. And any time any contraceptive was mentioned, like in the question of AIDS, or access to the means, or whatever, they would put brackets. Reproductive health was in brackets throughout the document because it was like it could include abortion.

Chapter eight, paragraph twenty-five was dealt with for two and a half days of the five-day conference in Cairo. It was the unsafe abortion paragraph. They wanted that abortion was not a method of family planning, period. And that's it, nothing more about abortion. I said that that really you cannot, if you really want to progress in improving women's health, and

adolescent health, you cannot just leave it like that and push it under the carpet. And then many governments took this on, including the U.S. The U.S. was very much a leader on this in Cairo, but many other governments also.

The Vatican then organized meetings with Muslim groups in Rome—several of them. They called all these very conservative religious leaders. They sent out delegations to all the Muslim countries. I mean, they carried out a huge *demarche* around the world against the conference.

RJ: Against the conference.

NS: Altogether now, that they should boycott the conference, that they shouldn't attend, and so on.

RJ: Did any of that come to—

NS: I had invited not many heads of government, but a few I had selected to speak. I wanted all the women heads to attend. At that time, there were several. There was Khalida Zia from Bangladesh. There was the Turkish prime minister, Tansu Çiller. And there was Benazir Bhutto, and [Gro] Brundtland. Brundtland was coming, but the other three were all about to back out. Turkey backed out, and Khalida Zia, even though her advisers tried to get her to come. But some of these religious leaders that had been brought together by the Catholic Church started to agitate in the countries. Even in Egypt there was some agitation. And in Pakistan, there were some demonstrations. I was getting calls from Pakistan: "What are you doing? Some of these leaders will start to condemn you." And there were some threats that the UN received against me. I had strict security. They had a guard assigned to me around the clock. These guards checked the bathrooms before I could use them.

So the Vatican had launched a huge campaign against the conference because they could see that the conference document was getting a lot of attention and acceptance. The approach was being accepted by the majority of the countries. All the NGOs, with the Vatican opposition, all the NGOs rallied behind me at the conference. All the extreme groups suddenly were behind this common agenda. Women's rights were being threatened somehow. That is how we got this huge NGO support.

RJ: More from the women's movement than the human rights—

NS: More from the women's, but also many human rights groups. It was based in human rights. You see, when the first prepcom opened with the document being presented, Fred Sal was the chair. I made an opening statement introducing the document. Then, I think one of the first speakers was the Vatican—the Holy See. They said this was an unethical document. I was really angry. I thought it was like an abusive word to me. I thought it was totally ethical. In fact, I thought they were unethical. I was really upset with that statement but as a staff member could not retaliate.

But Fred Sal really gave it to them. He said, "Anyone who can call this unethical must be out of their mind. What do you mean by ethical? Is it to deny people their rights? That's ethical?" He made a really good speech. But the opposition were trying to make it sound immoral. I'm not sure where they read all that into it.

Anyway, when I went to Cairo about two weeks before the conference, there was very great uncertainty about the Muslim countries, whether they would attend and at what level. And if nobody sent anyone high-level, that would have looked really bad. Then the Egyptian newspapers started condemning the conference because Sheik Al-Azar had said that this was a conference that was promoting free-love and I'm not sure what else. So I went to see him. They

were not telling me, in fact, in Cairo what was coming out in the Arabic newspapers. I had a hard time getting some translations. Anyway, I went to Sheik Al-Azar, and I said, "I am not sure how you can say these things that I understand you are saying about the conference." I said, "Have you read the document?" He said, "No."

So I said, "How can you say these things?" He said, "Well, my brother, the Vatican, has told me. And they were at the conference." I said, "I think they must have been mistaken, or you heard them wrong, because it doesn't say any of these things." So I said, "Will you please read the Arabic translation?" So they read the Arabic translation. Apparently in the Arabic translation, some of the things were—like reproductive health—came out like giving good reproductive services, or something like that. Essentially, the Al-Azar University gave it support and the sheikh even attended the opening.

I went to see the foreign minister in Egypt. I said, "We really have to have a big *demarche* with the Muslim countries." I called up everybody. I called up the U.S. and Britain. They said, "You are running a conference. You are not running our state departments." I said, "I request you to send people out to all the countries." I was getting quite worried, you see, in the short time left before the conference. Then I spent several hours with Benazir Bhutto, persuading her to come to the conference with the foreign secretary of Pakistan. I spent two hours with the foreign secretary in Pakistan. He said, "OK, I will tell her that she should come." I said, "Whatever you suggest to her, it doesn't matter. But tell her what I said why she should come. That is all I ask you to do," because I didn't talk to her directly. I said, "Tell her that she will be publicized all over Europe. There will be pictures of her all over the world. If she comes here, she should say her prayers in the Al-Azar mosque."

He did tell her what I had said, but then recommended against her going. But she decided that she would come. She said, "What I did was I insisted all the ministers of population and health will come, including all from the provinces. They will all come behind me." They didn't want to come, you see. She said, "But if I go, I want them all to be with me." So they all came to the conference. The minister of population of Pakistan was a Catholic, by the way—you know, from the minority groups. So he came to the conference. All the time, all he wanted to do was to meet the representative of the Holy See.

So Benazir Bhutto did come and Brundtland came. So on the opening day, Al Gore was to come. But he broke his ankle. Then it was like touch and go. I said, "He has to come, because at least we will have a good opening session." Al Gore did come, and it was quite dramatic.

RJ: On crutches.

NS: On crutches, yes.

RJ: I remember.

NS: And Brundtland came and Benazir Bhutto. Then we had the king of Swaziland. He was the highest ranking African. He made actually a very good speech at the opening session. So all these people made really dramatic speeches. Benazir was a good speaker. She made a speech which was for the western countries, for the rest of the world, and one speech that was for internal consumption about our religion and our values. There were two parts of the speech. But it was reported all over the world.

RJ: And Mrs. Bundtland's speech, as I recall, was very good.

NS: She was a wonderful speaker. She made a very good speech. In fact, she even suggested that abortion should be decriminalized—not legalized, necessarily, but decriminalized.

Her delegation was very opposed to her saying anything about it. You know how Brundtland agreed to come? She came to give the Salas Lecture in New York. I can't remember the exact date. And she gave a very good lecture. I just said, "I hope we will see you, Gro, at the conference." So she turned around and said, "When is the conference?" The dates were told to her. She said, "OK, I will come. Announce it publicly." So that's how she decided to come. Then she made a very, very good speech.

Camdessus came. Who was the president of the World Bank? He didn't come, but the deputy came.

RJ: Cavalo.

NS: Cavalo was not there. Cavalo, I think, had left. Was he there?

RJ: Mr. Peterson.

NS: But he didn't come. Anyway, we had a panel there—what was it called? "From Rio to Copenhagen, via Vienna and Cairo." So I had Nitin in the panel. I had the Dane, that parliamentarian. And then whoever else on this panel. Then I had another panel, to which I invited the whole press. It was to ask the questions that they always wanted to ask but never had the opportunity to—Camdessus and the World Bank and Mrs. Brundtland, as prime minister representing the other developed countries, and one other person. These two panels were absolutely fantastic. The rooms were full. Camdessus, in fact, said, "I enjoyed myself thoroughly." I said, "This is an opportunity for you to answer all the criticism that is levied against you." He is actually very brilliant when he is in a one-on-one. And he talked about the social pillar, and that is the UN. That all went down very well.

RJ: I remember both opening sessions, when there were eight women out of ten on the official opening. And I think also there were eight women out of ten on the NGO opening. That really was a first for the UN.

NS: The NGO opening was very good as well. Mrs. Mubarek made a very brilliant speech. You know what I did also in the preparatory thing was to, without actually asking anyone's permission, I let the NGOs into the gallery. I just announced to the conference that, "Of course you won't mind if the NGOs just sit and listen to your discussions." Now, the NGOs were already there, so no government would object. They said it was alright. Later, at other conferences, they wouldn't allow it. They said they can't negotiate. I said, "That is up to whoever is chairing. It is not for me to say. But you may want to invite them from time to time to hear their views."

So the conference broke into committees. Nick Meekman was in charge of one of the committees—the one with all the controversial issues. I suggested to Nick that maybe—and Nick is very skillful—he should from time to time invite NGOs to sit there. They could sit, but they couldn't negotiate. But if governments gave permission, they could express their views. So that was a very good process. The NGOs in the main hall, when a plenary was held, when someone made a speech that they didn't like, they would hiss. When someone made a speech that they liked, they clapped. In fact, the Vatican came to complain to me, "We are a government like any other. We cannot be insulted like this." I said, "If you think I can control everyone in the world—I have no powers that I know about. I wish I had that." What he wanted to say was, "You let them in." But they couldn't say that because they were already in.

RJ: Now two other groups that expressed opposition—there was the Charlie Westoff comment.

NS: That was after the conference, yes.

RJ: But that must have been a certain position of, if you like, the old-timers.

NS: Well, they were not very vocal during the preparatory process. I think their voices, because there were so many NGOs, so their voices got obviously not heard. In the end, I told the NGOs, "You have to come to a consensus yourself. You cannot expect me to bring your views together." I think what Charlie Westoff and many of the demographers say is that the importance of population issues was lost in Cairo. The importance of social issues, as important for population and development, became prominent. I said, "Well, I think that in a way was my objective. My objective was to put population issues as part of development issues." I said, "I wanted this debate on population *or* development to disappear because these issues are part of development. So long as we remain separate, it is somehow like we are imposing something on those that are concerned about development or people who need to develop."

I said, "This is like economic issues. You can't treat them as separate. We keep making the point that GNP is not to be treated by itself. And we attack it. We attack economists who only think about GNP growing and not how it affects the needs of people." I said, "In the same way, demographic issues can't just be these total numbers. You really have to think about how it affects individuals and how individuals want to address it as well." So I said, "It is the same approach."

The population numbers had been such an important part of the demographic issues. Somehow the demographers had also taken family planning as their strategy. In the beginning, when excessively high rates of growth were brought to the attention of the world community, then what to do about it? The answer was family planning. Though in fact, family planning, as I reminded everyone, did not start as a demographic need. It might have become that, but it was

really how to respond to the needs of these poor women who didn't want to have any children. We were talking about the needs of women. It was a health and a rights issue. Margaret Sanger also made it later into a demographic issue, but I said that was not the start of the movement. And how the movement caught on in all of our countries was on the basis of the rights and the health of the women and families. It was linked to the number of children, and they couldn't feed them, and they couldn't nurture them, and so on.

Somehow we have lost track of that. Besides, I said, "Just family planning is not all that women need." Charlie wrote an article—he's a good friend of mind—maybe in *The New York Times*, "Was Cairo a Disservice?" Just last year, I think, there was the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, which is held every four years. There also, it was "Whither Cairo?," or something like that. There were people who spoke for it, and people who spoke against it. Those who spoke against it, it was that the importance of the number has been downplayed. So the importance of demographic issues has disappeared.

I said, "I think this is a problem of the demographers, because the demographers only saw numbers as an issue. They never thought about the people behind those numbers." I think what Cairo has done is put the needs of people behind the numbers as the paramount approach that needs to be pursued, and that the numbers would then maybe be affected by what individuals did. In any case, the numbers are affected by the individual actions of men and women, not by some government caveat or some government policy. It can never be and it will never be.

RJ: To jump ahead, do you feel the dramatic decline in fertility rates in very many parts of the world, so that now we are approaching half of the world living in countries where fertility is below reproduction levels—do you see that as—

NS: I don't think still that is half the world that lives in countries that—

RJ: I thought it was 44 percent.

NS: Well, if you take China. But India is nowhere near replacement level, as yet. It will be. All of Sub-Saharan Africa is not. That is why I said we should not deal with the global figures. I think the global figures—each country has to deal with it itself, its national figures. I think you have to look at, still, where the needs are still to have a fertility decline. It is all of the Sub-Saharan. It is all of the poorest countries of the world. All the Sub-Saharan African countries still have rates of growth of 3 percent. The size of family is still five and a half or six. Even India is still like three, or two point something or the other. Nowhere is it two. The countries that will get to replacement level in the future are countries like Thailand and Indonesia, possibly, China certainly. Countries like Egypt and Tunisia and India and so on, they will, but not in the immediate future.

What is being forgotten is that fertility declines won't necessarily continue if you don't continue to provide access to information and services, and certainly not in sub-Saharan African, and certainly not in many parts of South Asia as well, including even India. The poorest states don't have the highest resources and also not the most efficient systems and so on. So I think this whole issue of the birth dearth, as it's being called is, in a way, still maybe a strategy that is being pursued by those that are opposed to family planning.

I keep saying that, regardless of fertility, what we wanted to show at Cairo is not family planning for fertility decline, but that you must have access to means to control your fertility, regardless of what the demographic objective of the country is, because it is a right of the individual to be able to do so. Now whether he or she exercises it, that is their choice. But the state cannot deny it. And in the poor countries, by saying, "This is not a problem, therefore we

don't need to do anything about it, and forget about family planning," is totally wrong. That is like saying, "Deny them their rights."

So I think it is not a very solid argument. As far as the world is concerned, the numbers are huge. We are going to continue to increase for at least—even if today we were at stable levels of population, a size of family of two or two point one, you would still increase for another fifty years.

RJ: With population momentum.

NS: Momentum, right. So there is no question that there is going to be a birth dearth around the world. And the countries in the industrialized world, which have this low birth rate, have to deal with that problem. Those are the countries like Spain, Italy, Japan. Some of the countries like the Netherlands and Sweden have dealt with it by having planned migration. Their birth rates are not that low. They have had migration and the migrant population fertility was higher. That has sort of kept a population balance there.

But Japan, for example, will not allow any migration. It is one of the most solidly anti-immigration countries. It is totally homogeneous. In fact, even the Koreans who have lived there for so long will not get nationality. I think there are other ways that they have to look at it—not necessarily that they have to have large amounts of immigration, but they can have planned labor exchange and so on. They have many other ways to look after labor needs that then they are willing to consider. And maybe now, with the terrorist activities and all that, maybe it will be even more difficult to do that.

Also, there was a recent discussion on the projects that the Population Division is going to make. Many of the experts are not agreeing with the rates of fertility decline that are the basis of the assumption of the projects.

RJ: They think they are likely to be higher? This is the median projections?

NS: Right. That the rate of fertility decline, for example, I think, predicted for Africa is not going to be as rapid. I think that they may be right. You know, the last set of projections had to be raised because the rate of decline in Bangladesh and in India and in Nigeria, and three, or four, or five countries, was higher than was projected. So you can see that you can have setbacks which set back these programs.

And it is not like the status of women is changing so rapidly. It is not changing as rapidly as one would like. If that changed very rapidly, then you would have a huge change. I think that would make a huge difference. But denying access to family planning programs will make the difference to those that use it, and who are poor, and those that want to use it who are also poor. But it is not going to be the main difference as far as dramatic fertility decline. I think dramatic fertility decline has come in countries where several things have been done at the same time—education, especially for girls and women; more economic opportunities for women outside of the home; and access to family planning information and services; and basic health, like maternal mortality and infant and child mortality reduction.

So all of this combination has had the best effect. Those are our development goals, anyway. And those are our human rights goals. So I think that when arguments are made for the family planning programs, I think it is totally a false argument because these are developmental goals regardless of what a demographic, or any other policy, has to be or must be.

RJ: Let me ask you just a word about a colorful and surely wonderful late Bella Abzug.

NS: Bella Abzug was fantastic as the Cairo conference. During the Rio conference, I remember that there was some formulation on responsible parenthood, or something like that—responsible methods of family planning, or something. These are all like code words for

abstinence, you know. I remember calling her and saying to her, "You should ensure that the original language of Mexico is preserved." She said, "But what is the difference?" She wasn't sure, and why should I make a fuss over this. I said, "All that is fine, but it should be 'women-controlled' and 'women-managed,' or whatever, based on their needs. But it should be 'reproductive health and family planning,' but not 'responsible' something." We had a big discussion on that. Anyway, she did come around.

Before that, she was a little bit against this approach of top-down and all that. But for the Cairo conference, once she came on board, she was the most fantastic supporter. Really, she used to organize a meeting of what she called the "caucus" every day from her wheelchair. She invited different people to come and address why they had their views. She invited the Vatican and all kinds of governments to address the caucus. She worked so hard. She drafted very well. So she had language drafted as suggested alternatives. She put it on everyone's desk. She was absolutely fantastic.

RJ: An organizer supremo.

NS: Once she was on board under this umbrella, she was really absolutely a huge force, a huge force. She had also had this way of getting the developing country NGOs, the timid people, to come and speak, to give them the floor. "I am an old hat. I have the hat," she said. You listened to her. She was actually wonderful.

You know, before the first prepcom, I spent the whole weekend briefing the different groups of NGOs, going through the whole document with them, telling them what paragraphs I thought might be—they were so diligent. They marked everything. They read everything. I said, "You think about alternative language which may be acceptable to you, that you could then

propose. Always with language in the UN, you try to convey the same meaning, but put it in another language." They worked so hard.

RJ: And they had a briefing mode that covered every paragraph in the formal draft.

NS: Right.

RJ: I think that, in my view, was the most best-prepared, supportive conference—supportive NGO conference I have ever seen.

NS: Well, we spent a lot of time because they participated in all the preparatory meetings as well. Then, in every country that I visited—I must have visited 100 countries before the conference—I had meetings with every NGO. I mean, every country's NGO group. At whatever stage their preparation was, I briefed them on that. And many international groups, like CEPA, the Center for Development and Population, organized very many meetings. The group with Bella—they organized people. They had identified people who helped the NGOs from the developing countries understand, learn, and so on, and then did all these briefing notes. The briefing notes were prepared by very many people. The International Women's Health Coalition—Adrian Jamaine and Joan Dunbar—all these people were fantastic.

RJ: Let me now ask you to reflect on the relationship between the lessons of the population and development conference and the other conferences. What you have described to me is perhaps the most active secretary-general role of any of the conferences.

NS: Very active, yes.

RJ: I would have thought the Nitin Desai view that these conferences are for governments, let the governments—

NS: That's a different view, yes.

RJ: It is almost the polar opposite. Now when you look at the children's summit—

NS: But the children's summit was also a very active secretariat. So I often used to use the example. I said, "The conferences that have been successes are conferences in which the secretariat has played a very active role in providing the information and being an advocate, maybe, for certain issues. After all," I said, "I have paid a lot of money and I have dedicated the years of my life. So I am not a nincompoop, sitting up there to say nothing. I am meant to have a view, and I am meant to convey the view. In the end, the governments will decide."

And I said, "Secondly, we should not try to think about the politics of the situation. We have to think about what is right and what should be done, and let the politics—I mean, the politics will come in. The governments will provide the political game, but we shouldn't help them with that political game by saying, 'Oh, let's not address this issue. It is politically sensitive,'" which is what I used to keep hearing. I sometimes used to say, "The only two conferences that are really successful are the children's summit and the population conference."

RJ: But you wouldn't say that, subsequently, about Beijing? Or even about the Copenhagen summit?

NS: I think Beijing was only successful because of Cairo. I mean, the issues of Cairo dominated. If they had had their way, they would have pushed out all these issues from the Beijing document. Even Gertude used to say to me, "I should not deal with that." I said, "If you do not deal with the reproductive health issues in a women's conference, I don't know where it should be addressed. You should try to go further."

But they only had those recommendations because many of the governments that had participated in Cairo now were in Beijing, and they insisted. In the original document, reproductive health was like it was dealt with in Cairo, therefore it does not need to be dealt with. I think it was successful, except that the NGO forum was so far away that they couldn't

participate, while the NGO forum in Cairo was across the road, at the football stadium. So they came and went all the time. And they were in the delegations anyway.

You know, after the Cairo conference, the Population Division and UNFPA did a briefing for DESA, Nitin's office, on all the things that we had difficulties on, and how we had managed the NGOs, and all of those kinds of things, to brief them on lessons learned, and that we would be willing to help them through the process. NGO accreditation was a huge issue because a lot of new NGOs were being set up, so which NGO, and who should speak? So we gave a huge briefing, like several hours, to them. I had meetings with the whole staff of the conference—not just the staff that prepared the documents, but all the various services, like security, and the interpreters, and the conference secretariat that does the procedures. I didn't discuss with them what they were doing. I discussed with them what the conference was going to achieve. Everyone said, "Why are you doing that?" I said, "Because the whole idea is to have as many supporting your outcome."

So they became quite interested. They really got seized with the fervor. All the conference security people and the interpreters and the translators and the document workers—there were so many different groups—I had meetings with all of them. Joti in fact said to me, "Why are you talking to them about the substance?" I said, "I don't want to talk to them about security. What do I know about all that? All I said to them was, 'That I leave to you. I am telling you what the conference is going to do, and you are going to be part of it. So if anyone asks you what this conference is about, don't just say population and development. You tell them what it is about and that these are the issues and so on.'"

So the results were that I had the best security. You know, when I go into the UN, nobody asks me for my pass. But they really felt part of the process.

And for Cairo itself—you know, they have these strange procedures. Maybe they're not strange, but at conferences, everyone sits in their place. Then the conference chair is elected. It is usually the president of the conference. Then they go through this one hour of procedural rubbish—the vice presidents and the rules of procedure, and blah, blah, blah. I was told all of this, so I told Peggy, in the conference services, "This is just a waste of important people's time. So why can't I just do this before?" In any case, in Cairo, everyone had to be in their seat one hour before, or something, because security for Mubarak is so stringent. They said, "No, then it is not legal. It is only starts with the election of the chair, and the Secretary-General opens the conference." I said, "I am not sure that it can't be done. I am going to tell the Secretary-General to give me his authority to open the conference." They thought it was very strange.

Everyone had sort of come along with whatever I said. I said, "I don't want to waste all this time. The opening ceremony must be the speeches. The speeches should be remembered—not all this legalistic, rubbishy stuff." So that's what I did. I opened the conference in the name of the Secretary-General. I asked the Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, and he said, "Fine. Do whatever you like." I must tell you also that Boutros-Ghali was extremely supportive. I gave an interview in, I don't know which press, but it came out in the *Herald-Tribune*. It looked like I was attacking some groups, et cetera, which I wasn't. It was just that I was talking about the issues, and the UN's role is to look after the needs of people around the world, and politics is for governments—some things like that. It was four columns or something like that. I believe that people around the SG went to tell him, "Look what she's doing. The UN will be in trouble." He is supposed to have said, "This is exactly the role the UN should be playing."

RJ: Very good.

NS: "This is our role, and we must not bow down to anyone's pressure," which I thought was very nice of him. I mean, I didn't even know this. He was very pleased with the conference. He told me, "You are getting a lot of publicity for the conference. So who is your PR (public relations)?" I said, "My PR is actually the pope." We got a lot of publicity because of the pope and the Vatican people.

RJ: But sticking to this issue, many of us feel that global conferences are indeed something which only the UN can organize—with that legitimacy, with the high profile.

NS: Yes. I think that so much is said about UN conferences that they are talk shows. I think that UN conferences have been absolutely dramatic in the way they have changed thinking around the world. It might be a slow process. It is a cumbersome process. After all, there are so many governments. And it looks like it doesn't get anywhere. But in fact, the slow process of arguing and dialoguing and giving in, et cetera, leads to a consensus and moves the issues along. When you think about human rights, where did it come from? It comes from the UN. We haven't achieved everything, but we keep moving along steadily. The whole gender issue and women's rights issues have come from the UN. So many difficult issues that we never talked about are now being talked about by the same governments who would never even utter some of the words. The whole issue of population, fertility, reproductive rights, and so on, has come from the UN series of conferences and dialogues. Each time we have moved further. Environmental issues—they didn't start from anywhere else. There were environmental NGOs, et cetera, but it was the environment conference and the preparations.

Gradually so many things that were unacceptable are now the norm. So things that were not the norm are today the norm. I remember, in my short years—thirty years of working in the UN—that women's issues were—it was totally unacceptable for women to have rights beyond

and outside the honor and the needs of the family, and their rights were always subordinated under family needs. Now that is no longer so. We talk about women's rights.

Issues like female genital mutilation—I tried hard for so many years to get it on the agenda. In fact, in one conference in Alexandria that we had financed, the Africans were so angry: "Who are you to tell us what to do?" I was quite upset, but didn't know what to do. Now it went through in Cairo without a discussion.

RJ: Do you think that was in part because it was a global conference, as opposed to a regional conference?

NS: No, I think it was in part because the media did a fantastic job of presenting that subject. The night before the topic was to come up in the discussion, they had filmed something in Egypt. It was so horrible and dramatic that not one single government complained or said anything.

RJ: So that is suggesting the interaction between the media and the global conferences.

NS: Yes. I think also that the time had come that these kinds of practices were now unacceptable. I think rape, incest—none of these issues were talked. They are now in the agenda. There are recommendations on it. In Beijing, violence of all kinds—that was not talked about. It is very much now on the agenda. Sexual violence is on the agenda. Trafficking—many issues that were not discussed at all. And human rights and it's legitimacy over states' controlling individuals is now under debate. The Secretary-General has come out with the rules that the rights of people have to be defended by the UN. It is not accepted, but it is on the table.

So I think that the UN's way of doing work is cumbersome and slow, but it is a legitimate process because every country feels they have an equal voice so they can state their positions.

They may take exceptions, but the exceptions become fewer and fewer. Gradually, they joined the majority of countries who have become progressive or accepted—

RJ: What are the real issues with the donor countries and the industrial countries who see themselves as paying a lot of the bills—as yet another conference, how expensive they are. How do you see the supporters of the UN—

NS: Dealing with this.

RJ: Collecting the evidence to show this effectiveness of some of the high-profile, high-cost events, such as the global conferences?

NS: I think that there is one kind of conference that I am opposed to. If the conference has goals for ten years, or whatever, then to have another conference in the middle and to make a whole set of recommendations that have to be negotiated—I think that is not a correct approach. So these five-year—

RJ: Rio Plus Five.

NS: And to have another document—I never included in the Cairo document a review five years later. In fact, the Population Division had this in previous conferences. I said, "We should do a review, but it should just be a review of where we are."

RJ: A review by UNFPA or Population Division.

NS: Or everyone—a collective review, but not a new set of recommendations. It was made to by all the governments, because they thought somehow I was being shortchanged, because every other conference was having plus fives, so I should have a plus five. I was totally opposed to it. I said, "All we will do is try to renegotiate. Or those that didn't get their way the first time want to get their way the second time."

RJ: Has there been a Cairo Plus Five?

NS: Yes. It was in 1999. We debated on the same issues. The idea was to move it forward, but we had a hard time suddenly to even keep what we had got. We did move it forward in some case. What we did have was an excellent, excellent review conference in The Hague, which was outside out the UN, where in fact everyone came together to discuss their programs and what they had learned and what they had found difficult, and came up with a whole set of very recommendations. One hundred ministers attended that Hague conference.

I think we got so sucked up by The Hague conference that we thought that the UN would have the same kind of a review, but of course it was absolutely the opposite. Beijing Plus Five had the same kind of problem. Rio Plus Five didn't come to any conclusions. It ended with nothing. At least Beijing and the ICPD both had a set of recommendations. But you know, it was a lot of hard work.

So I am opposed to this kind of review which makes another document for negotiations. I think the review should be just a review of where we are, and a general omnibus resolution that all countries must make an effort to implement as quickly as possible. I think we have had a very good series of conferences in the 1990s. We should only start to have another conference when we want to suggest something new, some new approach, but not just for the sake of having a conference.

So I think let's wait ten years later for Cairo. We have a whole new set of issues or some new set of approaches that we really want to push. Then we should have a conference, but not if we want to do the same things and we still want to achieve the same goals. Then I think we should just have a review.

RJ: If we look at the environmental case, actually Stockholm (UN Conference on the Human Environment) was 1972. Rio (UN Conference on Environment and Development) was

1992. Now they are going to have Johannesburg (World Summit on Sustainable Development) in 2002.

NS: But they had a Rio Plus Five.

RJ: And they had a Rio Plus Five, but they could well have left it twenty years.

NS: And now they are having Rio Plus Ten, and I am not sure what will come out of Rio Plus Ten. At the moment, they are still in a lot of difficulties. Nitin was saying he wants it to be poverty eradication, but the Social Summit did that. So I am not sure. I think a lot of the discontent, or whatever the word is, with conferences has been the five-year reviews because governments feel that they are going over the same issues over and over again. I think only new issues that are important need a UN conference to move them forward. There are now questions about five year reviews and on conferences in general.

RJ: How would you compare the role of the global conferences with, say, the commissions in the UN—the Commission on the Status of Women or other standing groups?

NS: Well, the Commission on the Status of Women has done a lot on these country reports. I think the whole subject of women's issues is so compartmentalized. There are so many different units, and not all of them are working together. I think that has been a big problem in the UN. One of the surprises, to me, is why more hasn't happened, as far as women's issues are concerned, in the world. I think there is recognition, and I think there is money available for gender issues. We could have done a lot more if—I think the reason that we haven't progressed as much as we could is because the UN system is very compartmentalized. Each one deals with one aspect of it, and no one deals with the overall of how to mainstream gender issues and women's issues into the sectors of development.

Even with all the funds available from so many donors, especially for women's programs, the programs again have been very compartmentalized—even at the country level. The Canadians have spent a lot of money. The Dutch have spent a lot of money. But there is no overall direction in the UN system for these issues. At one point I suggested to the Secretary-General, "The conferences which have had the best follow-up are the ones which have a field organization that can take the lead. Again, both UNICEF and UNFPA, to me, were the examples." I said, "In my opinion, for the follow-up of a conference, an organization which has a presence in a lot of countries at the field level should be given the responsibility for follow-up, with maybe the technical support of the other organization."

RJ: Let me press you on that. I agree with you personally on UNFPA and UNICEF. But then you say, which of the other parts of the UN have a field presence. Only UNDP. Then you say UNDP has been given responsibility for the follow-up to Copenhagen. But because it has also got so many other disbursed responsibilities—

NS: It has not been given the responsibilities for Copenhagen. For Copenhagen, the responsibility is apparently with ILO. The Social Summit is with ILO. The UNDP has been given responsibility for the Millennium goals. But the Social Summit was ILO, not UNDP—with the support of UNDP and World Bank.

RJ: But my point is, there is only really three UN agencies with a field presence of any substance. With UNDP, it's disbursed. You might say, "What about the World Bank?," but it's a very different sort of presence.

NS: For example, on gender and women's issues, I think the UN could have taken the lead.

RJ: Could have been given it and taken it.

NS: And they could have used UNIFEM (UN Development Fund for Women). Even though UNIFEM is located in UNDP, the UNDP still has its own separate technical gender unit. So they don't use the regional advisors of UNIFEM as their advisors. I think we are the only ones. UNFPA is the only one that has put their gender advisors with UNIFEM to try to increase the pool. I think all the organizations of the system should pool their gender advisors. Everyone has gender advisors, and many of them have them in their field. Somehow they should become a critical mass together, so when they go to a country they can advise a country on how to mainstream gender issues, and do it from all aspects—not just one thing here and there.

RJ: But let me stick to the point of follow-up to conferences. If we think of the conferences in the 1990s—

NS: Environment.

RJ: Environment. You had human rights. You had the food summit. You had habitat. Now all of these are ones where there is no obvious agency with a field presence to do that follow-up.

NS: By the way, FAO has a field presence in 170 countries, or something like that—but not a very operational presence. So it is not an operational mode. The idea was that this should come under the resident coordinator. I think that if there is a will of the whole system, we could organize it. We could use the resident coordinator, not as a UNDP representative, but as a resident coordinator of the system, which should be totally separated from UNDP. I think that one of the weaknesses of our field office is that there is no one leader. We each belong to different organizations, and the resident coordinator belongs to the UNDP. He or she is always seen as UNDP. So the agencies don't fall behind the resident coordinator for all the reasons that I used.

The FAO, for example, has a presence in every country of the world. UNESCO has a presence in a huge number of countries. The office costs more than the program they finance. It is, in my view, a total waste of their money. So somehow, let's say UNESCO's education program—or whatever program there is—could be implemented by a field presence that already exists. The UNESCO person could be the technical advisor to that program, rather than have a UNESCO office which costs $100,000 or $200,000. Sometimes in a country they have projects worth only $60,000. They say they are setting the norms and the standards, but it is not really so. The norms and the standards are not there.

There are no easy answers. UNDP is not the answer because UNDP also does not have the intellectual presence or the type of—

RJ: Hands on capacity to get things done.

NS: Yes. The thing is that in every country, you cannot have all the priorities—everything cannot be a priority. You have to select the priority. Then you have to make the effort to implement that in the best possible and the shortest possible way, and find out what will make that happen. This is what UNICEF does with the analysis, and so on, and what UNFPA also tries to do with analysis and different approaches and so on, and building partnerships with a whole group. But since our areas are limited—but in a sense, we make our areas limited because we want to work in a small area.

RJ: And get things done.

NS: And get things done. You can enlarge it as much as you like. You will be running around trying to cover every subject. I am trying to say it is a fault of the system which makes organizations have to participate in everything. The UN drug control program—it was a topic on one of the ECOSOC agendas. UNFPA had been quite helpful to the drug control program when

they were trying to become more field-country oriented. I suggested that they could link up with us on AIDS, and drug abuse, and adolescent reproductive health, and the educational program. So we had some small—obviously not a major collaboration, but some small project. But it was the first collaborative effort that they had in the field.

There was the ECOSOC session on this. The heads of agencies were invited to speak, so I said to the drug control head that he could include a section, one paragraph, on UNFPA and say that this is what we had done. UNDCP (UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention) were very upset. No, I had to come and speak as all the other heads of organizations were speaking. I was saying that I had already spoken to this ECOSOC already four times, on I don't know which topics. So it doesn't make sense for every head of agency to address every topic. But if you are not there, and your colleagues are there, it is like you have somehow insulted them by not appearing. The system really needs to be streamlined. Priorities have to be of people's time, and the inputs that are really effective, rather than this *pro forma* thing of appearance and all that.

I think that is the same thing that has happened with the conference. The conferences themselves have done a lot, because every organization at the country level in these areas like human rights or environment or gender or children or whatever, uses the international conferences, the conventions, and so on, as a way for advocating the subject in their own countries. So it has an important effect, and it changes what is happening at the country level. But to get the maximum effect, you need an effective presence at the country level of a UN organization that becomes the lead, and a coordinating body that puts many of these things together, because many of the conference recommendations are common. The goals are common.

RJ: Many.

NS: Many of the goals are common. So you need a common coordinator who does not think about his or her agency, but as how do we all work together. So if UNICEF is doing children, well then UNICEF should have it all. So if I do something in education, I should put it into that same program and vice versa—not have to have a flag on every topic. I think that we should move into the sector approach. In this country, these are the five things we think we can do something about in five years, and then make a sectoral approach for all the agencies to participate, including food and labor and whatever else. But it is not easy to do.

RJ: Well, Nafis, thank you very much. It's lunchtime, and we'll come back this afternoon both to the issues of interagency collaboration, the reform of the UN, and the future of the UN. I would also like you then, if you would, to give us an overview of the progress made in population over the last fifty years, and what have been the forces besides those of the UN that have contributed to that. So thank you very much.

RJ: This is tape four on the afternoon of May 21st, with Richard Jolly interviewing Nafis Sadik. Nafis, perhaps you would tell us a bit more about ideas for the UN reform. You've already said something about coordination in relation to conferences, but perhaps the more general issues of reform in relation to the challenges the UN will face over the next one or two decades.

NS: The present Secretary-General started, I think, the major reforms in the UN system of trying to get more coordination between the different parts of the organizations that came directly under him, and then trying to expand it also to the ACC group of organizations. In his first term, he set up these various executive or coordinating committees on peacekeeping, on political affairs, on economic and social affairs, and on development. I think that probably of all

the four groups, the development group has probably done more things, partly because I think the organizations in it are operationally-minded. There were many things that they were already doing at the country level. We had the predecessor, the JCGP, the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, which had already laid the foundation for collaboration between the operational organizations of the system.

I think a lot of the work that was done by that group, which was moving slowly but steadily forward, was then taken over by the UN Development Group (UNDG). In addition, in the UN Development Group, it also set up a secretariat for itself, with seconded staff from the four organizations. That sort of brought some more continuity. In fact, one of the problems of the JCGP was that it did not have a secretariat. A recommendation on an assessment of the work of the JCGP in fact recommended that there should be a secretariat that would provide continuity to the ideas and agreements that needed to be followed up and implemented.

So I think the UNDG in a way reflected on those recommendations and used them to develop this idea of the secretariat. There is a lot of work done between agencies all the time—between UNICEF and UNFPA, and between UNFPA and UNDP, and so on.

RJ: And WHO.

NS: And WHO. The three were very much involved in many issues. But there were also some points of conflict—not real conflict, but the desire to have your separate identity and your separate program. That comes from the fact that you are all doing fundraising on the basis of the performance of your program and, therefore, the need to show visibility and to show results for your organization.

I think this is something that we haven't found a way to overcome. We did make progress in trying to get a common overall approach at the country level. We came up with this

idea of a UN country development framework under which all the programs of the operational organizations would follow as an umbrella objective as the objective or the main goal, and then showing how the objective, or the core programs of the different organizations would help to achieve that objective. Also, we developed a whole set of procedures on country assessments and common data systems and so on.

Sometimes it was a bit bureaucratic. So many indicators were put into the country assessment. I think there were fifty-four. Everyone wanted their indicator in.

RJ: But UNFPA took a lead with that.

NS: With that, yes. We were in the lead for the indicators. But still, I think there were too many. Of course, it was to accommodate everybody's needs. And then the country would, in the end, decide which of these indicators were most appropriate for its particular situation. But you know, that doesn't always happen. In the beginning, the whole country development framework was like an exercise separate to the individual country programs. Somehow there was no need to link your individual program to the development framework because nowhere was this presented a whole.

Now the executive boards have agreed that the executive boards of the UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF would consider the development framework and the programs of the three organizations at the same session, or the back-to-back sessions, or joint sessions of the two executive boards. This might make the real coordination at the country level perhaps move a little bit further.

RJ: Has that been in operation for a year or two, or has it just started?

NS: I think it has just started. I am not sure. When I left in 2000, this was the proposal. I think it was on board. Now I am not sure whether country programs have already been presented under that. I think you will have to find out.

There were many things that we agreed should be done, but we never seemed to complete them. We had many different task forces set up on common procedures for financial management, common personnel systems at the country level. Maybe a procedure is not necessarily that we would delegate the hiring of personnel to someone else, but that we would all follow the same kind of salary structures and things. But I don't think that we actually got to implementing all these agreements. On the financial rules and regulation, they seemed to be different for all three organizations. They were even different for UNFPA and UNDP, which in fact have in a sense a common administrative—

RJ: Just say a word why that arose.

NS: Because the budget that we had for our projects—the budget lines differed because we had different requirements in our projects than UNDP. So the budget lines of the financial document sort of somehow dictated the different rules and regulations. Then UNDP, for example, didn't have the possibility of financing NGOs to start with, and we always financed and used NGOs. So it was for UNDP a subvention. In the case of UNFPA, it was a partnership. So it was for a very good reason that the financial rules and regulations were different.

We financed, in many countries—in Africa, for example, we had small projects which we financed totally because it was to demonstrate to the government that this could work and then encourage the government to put money in their own budgets to take over the cost. A lot of the program costs are, in fact, salary and personnel. We got our executive board, for example, to approve that in the least developed countries, particularly in Africa, we could have a ten-year

engagement in local costs for personnel and that governments could take this over over a ten year period of time. I thought at that time that ten years was quite a good period, but in fact you find that it is not because many countries suffered a lot of economic reversals and then really couldn't fulfill that part of the bargain.

I think we have to think of how we can help governments whose budgets are overall just so small to deal with the expensive investments that need to be made over a long, long term in the social sectors. It is facile to say it is the governments' responsibility. Well, then they really cannot achieve the goals that they and the international community have agreed on. It is something that we need to think about.

But anyway, these were the reasons why the financial rules and regulations were different. And I think there are many things in which we could have common rules and procedures, like in the buying of equipment and supplies at the local level. End even internationally we could set up some kind of an approach where we could all buy in the same. For example, UNFPA buys contraceptives, but there is no reason that the procedure for the contraceptive buying should be different from the procedures for buying anything else.

RJ: Essential drugs.

NS: Essential drugs or anything else. But there seemed to be a different set—I think what we need is a set of financial rules and regulations for purchasing of equipment and supplies, which could apply to anything, and that we all follow the same set of rules. Even silly things—organizations look as if they are working independently of one another, like if you organize a conference locally, organizations pay different per diem rates. Or travel costs—some pay business for some levels. I think those should all be standardized.

As part of reform, as I suggested to the SG, we should have the same term of office for the heads of organizations. Even those that come under the Secretary-General have different terms. UNICEF, I think, has a five-year term. UNDP and UNFPA have four-year terms. It doesn't make any sense. If the SG says no one should stay more than ten years, then the five-year term is logical. You could have two five-year terms. I don't think these need major great reform. I am not sure that different lengths of tenure need to have some kind of standard approach. These are not major impediments to working together, but it sort of makes the system look as if it is not one system.

RJ: Let me ask you two questions about this. One is the knee-jerk reaction that all such differences are just inefficiency or reflect the self-serving interests of the different agencies. Whereas your NGO example, funding NGOs in UNFPA—but that wasn't, at that time, part of UNDP—some of these different reflect differences in operations that actually make for efficiency.

NS: Right. My suggestion in this common financial system was that we should look at those that are the most progressive and that apply to many different situations, and make those the standard rules. Now, if an organization doesn't use NGOs, it doesn't have to use them. But the financial rules book should have one set of rules which should be applicable for all the needs that UNFPA might have or UNICEF might have or UNDP might have. UNDP may not use half of them. But it still should be the same set. You can still have the same set of procedures. You don't have to make them different.

You know, in financial rules, they are very stringent in legal terms. You do this or you don't. You have to have it. Like signed project documents—without it you cannot start. Every year a budget revision must be signed. Those may be common and should be done by everyone.

RJ: There is the other side, that when you move to a common system—

NS: You take the worst.

RJ: You often take the worst, and you often so overplay common things from an essential point of view that you lose the flexibility that was developed in order to give a $500 grant to an NGO without having to go to headquarters for approval. Indeed, I remember in UNICEF we gave legal permission by our board to reallocate up to $50,000 of a country program without reference headquarters at time of emergencies.

NS: But we had given authority in the UNFPA to reallocate the whole program, so long as the program objectives and the amounts stayed the same.

RJ: But these are good examples. I am for this personally.

NS: I think the other part is that we must have some common policies as far as decentralization and delegation of authority is concerned. If you have different levels of delegation, that is a problem. Agencies have no authority in the field, so when you come to any discussion in the field with the agency partners, they have to refer back, while UNICEF and UNFPA can agree.

RJ: So now let me ask you about the board politics of getting this reform. As I see it, one of the big moves was to appoint a Maurice Strong and to say let him be the supremo for reform. I don't know whether he got into the lessons of decentralization. I am asking you, in terms of the politics of reform, how you think we might draw on the best of experience and avoid even more bureaucracy.

NS: I think there is a very fundamental issue that has not been addressed and not resolved. Who is the resident coordinator? That is really a very fundamental issue. For all the discussion that we have had over the years and that the resident coordinator represents

everybody, in fact all the organizations think that he or she really represents UNDP. They are paid by UNDP, and in the final analysis they follow what UNDP instructs. You know, individuals are accepted—some individuals are excepted. But it is not an organizational arrangement that lends itself to good management practices.

Any organizational arrangement that depends on an individual is not a good arrangement. It must be an institutional arrangement. That is a subject that governments are not willing to address. In the Maurice Strong reform, the initial proposal was that there should be one development program, and that UNICEF and UNFPA and the development part of WFP (World Food Programme) should be all merged into UNDP. Obviously, we resisted very strongly for very obvious reasons in that UNDP was not very well-established and its funding was going down. Even Maurice Strong said that UNICEF and UNFPA were brand names and therefore they had to be preserved because they were well-known—especially UNICEF is very well known—and UNDP was not known at all, in spite of its fifty years of existence.

So that got blocked. But that reform had that as its main objective—to merge all of these organizations into one development group. I'm not sure the SG could have sold it to the member countries.

The other proposal that was on the table was that the resident coordinator should not be from any one agency but could come from any agency. There were two proposals. One was that the resident coordinator should be independent of the other organizations. The other was that the resident coordinator could be, for example, a UNICEF representative or a UNFPA representative, or a representative of any agency, and be the resident coordinator as well as the representative of the organization he or she came from, as it is now for UNDP.

RJ: Do you think that would have worked better?

NS: I'm not sure, but it may have. A third is, of course, that the resident coordinator should be financed on a pro-rated basis by the whole system, and located maybe under the deputy-secretary-general now, and be managed by a secretariat with seconded staff as the UNDG is. But obviously UNDP is very opposed. Mr. [Gus] Speth, in fact, said, "But that is our main function: coordination." This he felt would kill UNDP. And I thought that if that is the only function of UNDP, then I don't think UNDP should exist. I think many donors also said that. The Nordics also said that—that coordination cannot be what we finance UNDP for.

Anyway, this is a fundamental issue that has not been addressed. I think until that is addressed at the country level, we will always depend on individuals to make the system work coherently.

RJ: Let me give you the challenge that this problem has been going on for forty-five years, really from the beginning. The capacity study (*Study of the Capacity of the UN Development System*) in 1969, I think it was, essentially said, "UNDP should have all the money. It should have the authority and everything should be under it." It didn't work. It was not acceptable then, and it was never given the chance to work. And yet, reformers—many individuals, many UNDP leaders, and then Maurice Strong keep coming back to it. I find it frustrating that the analysis of the failures of the UN in its field operations should keep coming back to this solution.

NS: The same solution.

RJ: And yet, the governments talk with different voices in the FAO board, the UNICEF, the UNFPA board, and don't support this. So what gives about this?

NS: But also, I think there hasn't been a strong leadership from the UN itself. Now this comes from the Secretary-General's level to make this a proposal. It's never been a proposal

from the Secretariat. It's always been talked about. The Nordic study looked at it and suggested it. But it's not come from within the UN. And within the UN reform it hasn't come. Maurice Strong could have made that proposal, but his proposal was to merge it with UNFPA, not to have it as an independent unit. Somehow he couldn't go that distance.

When UNICEF an UNFPA opposed it, we said that we were certain—at least I was certain—that the money that we got would not just go to UNDP. I think they thought that UNICEF argued the same, that we got the money because we did certain things and the money would not just automatically flow. Then their solution was that there should be a kind of development czar and we would be a branch of that. Then what would UNDP be? That was then the question and it was never asked.

You see, I think it comes down from the fact that UNDP hasn't a very clear mandate. It has now got governance, which is very good, but not necessarily, I would say, bought by all the countries of the world. I think UNDP thinks all the developing countries buy it, but developing countries have become less engaged in the UNDP. Before, UNDP was something they supported regardless. They felt that it responded to their development needs. It is a major, major problem in the UN development system, which, until we get the role of UNDP sorted out, the leadership role at the country level will remain a problem and will be done at an individual level.

And then some of the things that need to be done to make it into one program at the country level are just not going to happen. For example, now we have the Millennium Goals. UNDP has been given the responsibility for a whole plan and a major effort for the implementation of the Millennium Goals. In UNDP—in fact, the goals are mostly social goals, and they are not actually implementing the social goals. More is done by UNICEF and UNFPA—

RJ: And WHO.

NS: And WHO and UNESCO and others, to some extent, but not UNDP. Poverty eradication, more is done in the World Bank sense of economic policies and reforms and so on. Micro-credit is not a major program of the UNDP; it's a major program of the World Bank. So I think the role of the UNDP, which I think Mark [Malloch Brown] is struggling to articulate, does sometimes quite effectively, is to increase demand for all the social services and make it possible for poor people to have whatever is needed to achieve these goals.

But it doesn't give a *raison d'etre* for the activities of the UNDP. That can be an advocacy role, yes. It is like UNFPA plays an advocacy role on gender issues, but is not all we do. We help with gender issues through reproductive health, and we play a very strong advocacy on the need for education for women, for women and policymaking, et cetera. But is not only what we do. We deliver reproductive health in family planning programs.

RJ: And from my experience in UNICEF, advocacy is vital. But unless you deliver something in a program, your advocacy also doesn't work.

NS: Right. You cannot have an advocacy without an element of that advocacy reflected in your program. I think that is a key. Now the SG is going into a second set of reforms. He thinks that he should go further. He is first of all trying to see what programs are still relevant. I think he is starting with the social and economic field because there are so many programs disbursed in all parts of the system. And each organization, I think is doing a self-assessment of what programs are relevant and why.

RJ: Relevant for the Millennium Goals.

NS: Yes. What role do they play? What is their comparative advantage? When they say this is their area of work, why is it their area of work? What competence do they have?

What have they actually done as far as countries are concerned? So let's see what this reveals. I'd be very interested to read—

RJ: I'm sure you know what it's conclusion is.

NS: All the programs are essential, and we have done this—blah, blah, blah.

RJ: Tell me what you feel about two things: the World Bank's role in this. Surely, the World Bank has gotten closer to the UN in the last two or three years. But at the same time, for the last fifty years, as our history project shows, there has been a migration of donor funding to the Bank and a migration of many responsibilities of things which the UN used to take on and be responsible for. Now donors are in fact giving the money to the Bank.

NS: Yes. The Secretary-General has, in fact, cultivated the World Bank and IMF as well. He wants them to be active partners. I think the two presidents have come to ACC meetings. The development committee now also comes to the ECOSOC. But I am not sure that the dialogue has yielded any steps of real collaboration. Take the example of the comprehensive development framework of the World Bank. Mr. Wolfensohn presented it to the ACC, and then said that we were all invited to participate, and he wanted to have a good consultation. But in fact, what should be in that framework was already decided by the World Bank before they ever had any consultations with us.

The same with the PRSP, the poverty reduction and strategy framework of the IMF. This was to be the countries' framework, and they wanted the UN system to be the interlocutor with the countries on what they needed to do and to help them to negotiate and do the policy work and so on. I am not sure the UN system has the capacity to help countries to negotiate. I think the UN system is trying, but I am not sure that we have—I do not believe that we have the economic, intellectual status in the UN. I think we need to have an economist of some stature

that can really speak out on issues and present the analysis in a way that makes sense. Why our point of view and not another point of view? "That" meaning the World Bank. We are not able to do that in a comprehensive way, partly because we are so fragmented.

RJ: And partly because the message the UN would present, and has presented, with a stronger or weaker voice, is not ultimately acceptable to the—

NS: The donors.

RJ: The Washington consensus—supporters, the donors, or at least the dominant donors.

NS: The dominant donors, yes. But I think that work the World Bank and the IMF are learning is that the UN is the place where the convening power is. The legitimacy is conferred by the UN. That is why in the PRSP, the IMF wanted the UN to be partners. That would make the process legitimate. I think in the discussion, the UNDP position was that we don't want to just be preempted into supporting an IMF position. If we participated, we should be able to say what we didn't agree with and for countries to be able to articulate that.

RJ: But my understanding is that PRSPs are still prepared by the Bank and the government, and only in most exceptional cases is the resident coordinator even brought in the process.

NS: The Bank and the IMF say no. In fact, I was a bit surprised to see in the "Macroeconomics on Health" report such great praise for the PRSP. There are several paragraphs on how wonderful the PRSP experience is. There are no examples of how health was actually then covered in these PRSPs. I know specific examples of which countries PRSPs are so wonderful in. But it was a bit of a surprise to me. To be honest, I haven't read any PRSP proposal, so I can't answer. But from what you hear from countries, it has not been their priorities that have been—

RJ: Let me ask—

NS: But I was thinking that maybe the SG should really have some way to have a dialogue with the major donors, maybe in a simple setting, an informal setting, and maybe try out some ideas of how he sees a division of responsibilities and what the UN role should be. For that to take place or to have an impact, there has to be a good analysis of the UN's capacities, and how he would be able to deliver the UN capacity to how donors want their money to be spent—not in how donors want it to be spent, but assuming they agree on the Millennium Goals, how he would then help countries to implement those goals.

For that, it means a real reflection and look at the UN capacities, and to also think about what we have done over the last so many years. Each of the organizations are also encroaching on the mandate of others. Somehow that should be dropped. Like UNICEF or UNFPA, we should use the work of the division, or WHO, or UNESCO. But this means, of course, that UNESCO, for example, must deliver when we need cultural research, appropriate social-cultural studies to help us with some analysis. As an aside—I am not sure I want it on the tape—but UNESCO doesn't even have an inventory of social-cultural work in the different regions of the world. I know that because when I started as head of UNFPA, one of the things I wanted was an inventory of all the social-cultural books, research, et cetera, maybe even just funded by UNESCO. I said, "What have you done that we could use as a basis for elaborating our own advocacy information programs?" They don't have any such thing. So if you don't even know their area of input—they are intellectual leaders in the social-cultural area, and their title is that.

RJ: Let me ask you, in relation to this, don't you, when you look at the UN, see that often the most exciting intellectual and creative work has been done by a special group? Of course, I think of Mahbub ul Haq's role in setting up the *Human Development Report*. I think in

some of the other cases it is not so much the routine civil servants of the UN who have done this. It is a special initiative, and it is individuals of exceptional creativity that have played this part.

NS: Your own work, *Adjustment With a Human Face*, is another example. I think that is absolutely correct, but that should be the norm. I think all the normative organizations of the UN should be repositories of knowledge—not necessarily have the knowledge in their house, but they should know where to get it. And they should know what is happening in their field. I think that is their job, not necessarily to do it themselves. They can identify the brilliant person who could do it, maybe. But when you go to an agency, what they want is money for them maybe to hire someone, or for them to do something, rather than, "OK, here. This is an intellectual problem you have. Let me see how I can help you to find work that can help you to solve it." I don't know how you make that change in that role. I think that is something we really need to think about.

RJ: But even at UNFPA—you said this morning—you turned to Jon Bongaarts for this, you turned to Steve Sinding.

NS: But those are all people that we knew. I didn't go to an agency to get it. I already—

RJ: But isn't that perhaps the secret? It is individuals who can be really creative?

NS: Let's say if I went to a division to ask for that, they would name me some people inside their division, or say, "Give me some money and then I will find them for you." I don't think that's how the system should work. I think you are right. I think the location of the individual is key, but the location of the individual should be the responsibility of that technical organization. And it should be done quickly when you need, not, "I'll give it to you after two months." Then you will start to develop these networks, and so on, yourself. Then you will have duplicated work that should really be done somewhere else. And I think we have then gone into

each other's areas of work where we don't need to be. That happens because we are not one system directed by—

RJ: There is another view I wanted to ask about, which is that competition between the agencies, and even coming up with different views, often looking back has been the source of great creativity. For example, the way some of the UN attack the World Bank on adjustment policies. If one said it should be a unified system, surely the adjustment policies as worked out in Washington would have been the dominant line, and everyone would have had to follow. But because UNICEF and ILO experienced, and indeed ECA (Economic Commission for Africa) came up with different perspectives, actually it illuminated the whole story much better. That must have been true between—WHO initially was totally unwilling to take on the family planning issues. UNFPA came and did it. So perhaps too much coordination may be a mistake.

NS: No, I am not talking about coordination so that there is only one set of views. I am talking about if you are, let's say, UNESCO, or whichever organization, what is your role. I think those roles which are just normative roles are not being played by these normative organizations. So that is not to say that you cannot have different points of view, but what I am saying is that the normative roles are not being played by these organizations. So we are taking on some of these normative kinds of roles. Then we make an inventory of social-cultural research, which we shouldn't have to do. This is what I am saying.

What I am also saying is UNESCO—it is not particularly UNESCO, but any of the agencies—then they want to get money to do work on the country level which we can do, which is what we are in existence for. So we are in fact going into each other's territory where, in fact, maybe neither has competence. We feel we have the competence because we can buy the expertise, but they certainly don't have the competence because they don't have the field

organizations. So they give it to somebody, and I'm not sure what happens to that. Anyway, I don't think you should have that on that tape.

It is such a muddled set of—every organization seems to do a little bit of everything. As far as the World Bank and IMF are concerned, which is really the donor doing, is that they have gone into areas which are—

RJ: Everything.

NS: Totally not theirs. They are not their areas. They were supposed to lend money. That is their job. They are not supposed to have access to grant funds. They are not supposed to be making policy. They are supposed to be lending money for development. They might do analysis and so on, but that is to help the countries. So they have gone into roles that are going into the UN roles of technical assistance, of capacity-building, of programs in various specific areas like education, like micro-credit, and so on. And these are not areas that they should be in. They say that the donors give them the money so what can they do? Sometimes their arms are twisted to take it. I am not so sure, but that's what they do.

I am on a committee of the Bank which is doing evaluation of policies and programs. They are going to make recommendations of World Bank policies on global public goods. I said that these are areas where the UN is very much involved. You should have many other partners, but really the main partner has to be the UN. In fact, maybe the main role has to be the UN. To help countries negotiate the WTO agreements, e.g., a UN role. I think with great difficulty they are listening to the fact that maybe the UN should be a partner.

They have selected some partners in the UN like ILO and WHO, but not the UN proper and not the operational organizations. But their view is that then the UN should also do an evaluation, like we are doing follow-up programs. Their evaluation is really independent

because it reports to the board, not to the management. Then we should sit down together and discuss what are our comparative advantages, and then what should be the policies, and what should each one of us do. I thought that this was quite a good idea, but I am not sure that the UN, on its side, can actually do this kind of evaluation, and do it quickly within one year. How do you get all the parts of the UN together to do it?

Then you start to think that there is something that needs to be done about the UN. In terms of capacity, we have much more than the Bank. In terms of money, I think we spend more than the Bank.

RJ: Certainly in grant money.

NS: The World Bank is trying to get the grant money now, and to some success. So they are in fact going into the areas that our money comes from. They do a much glossier analysis and presentation than the UN does. And the UN, many times whatever the analysis is is in so many different parts that nobody can get a hold of it. Some major, major reform of the UN has to take place.

RJ: Let me ask you quite specifically about the Bank in the area of population policy and support over the years, and in the area of gender and women's support. Did the Bank come in late or early into population?

NS: Well, the Bank came into the population early in the 1970s. But never was it too large in import. They had specific countries. Many times, you see, they wanted to loan money and most countries were not willing to take loans for population. Some countries, their arms were twisted to take it—like Nigeria, with great difficulty. Then the Bank procedures were really not suitable for social sector investment. But they still kept an interest in population issues. But you know, they have many health programs, but they didn't have family planning or

reproductive health in those programs. There are many large programs. In the sector reform, they forgot about reproductive health and family planning totally—in the health reform guidelines—until we pointed that out.

RJ: Which year was this?

NS: I think about four years ago, when the sector reform approach was starting to come in. Then we sent a group of people to—

RJ: The Secall Loans.

NS: Yes.

RJ: And when they did put in reproductive health or family planning, did they put it in broadly, in a good way, or were there major weaknesses?

NS: There were not so many places they were really the leading—they were the lead organization in Bangladesh. In fact, UNFPA never joined that consortium because they didn't totally agree with the approach. But the Bank had all the other donors—I think about twelve other donors, or ten other donors, as part of that consortium. The Bangladesh population program was, in fact, the World Bank Population Project. It was again very contraceptive-oriented, very sterilization-oriented. There were many women's groups who have, in fact, started to talk against the family planning program in Bangladesh, mainly because of the sterilization, which in fact are not associated with but we also got attacked. You know that book—Betsy someone wrote a book about Bangladesh. It was to do with this.

In our recommendations, when we did a needs assessment in preparation for a program, we always were recommending that the directorate of MCH and the directorate of family planning should be merged, and there shouldn't be a separate family planning. It was all in the Ministry of Health.

RJ: But they wanted it separate.

NS: They wanted it separate. They kept it. Then, in 1995, they realized that it should be merged. Then they pushed us to push the government. We had always recommended a merger, but many of the donors were very unhappy with us because we would not support them, they said. My view was that we had to show our separate monies and all that. I never said that we had a different approach, but that we couldn't join it. You know, the Canadians and so on used to say to us, "But why can't you join the consortium? You should be with the consortium." USAID didn't join and we didn't join—USAID because they didn't want to be in a consortium, and we mainly because I didn't agree with the approach of the Bank.

The Bank had a resident person for the population in Bangladesh. That is the only program where they were fully in charge and involved. In Thailand, the government was very much in charge. In Indonesia, in the end, it became in charge. They had much more resources and so on. So these were their main programs. I think there were a couple in Latin America. I can't remember which countries. But even in those Latin American countries, the country was much more in the driver's seat. In Africa, they tried the Nigeria program, then the Zimbabwe program. The Nigerians finally took the money, but Ransom Cooty was quite strong, so he got his approach and his view accepted. But it took about five years before the government would accept the Bank money.

RJ: And on women and gender issues, how has the Bank's role been over the years?

NS: I am not sure that they have been very prominent on gender issues, at least in the field. I have not heard much about it, nor have I heard much about it in the headquarters in the Bank. The Bank has very few women directors. I think Jim Wolfensohn has tried to bring some women in, and I think there are some vice presidents now who are women—the South African

lady and a few others. I don't know what the ratio of women to men is in the Bank. But I don't think it has ever been very much out in the front as far as gender issues are concerned.

The Bank has become much more sensitive to NGO concerns in the last so many years, partly because of the demonstrations, and partly I think because Jim wants to cultivate them. But he gets very disenchanted when he's had a meeting and the NGOs still feel he hasn't done anything. I am saying that just having a meeting doesn't mean that you have listened to them or are working with them.

RJ: Let me ask you to comment on the Secretary-Generals of the UN. You have worked with quite a number. Perhaps you would say something about their strengths.

NS: Mr. Waldheim was the first Secretary-General that we worked with. He came to visit all our organizations. But when we had a tenth anniversary, he didn't know who we were even. And when he came to give a speech to us, he had to look at the poster to remember our name.

RJ: The UNFPA name?

NS: I remember this. He was very nice and all that. But we never had too much contact with them. Then Javier came in after that and he visited all of the organizations. In 1987, he made the decision to appoint me, which I think was quite brave after all the pressures on him from the Japanese. You know, he was a very quiet and soft-spoken person. His English, I think, was not as good as his Spanish. So he was always very diffident about speaking in English. But I think he was always very firm and principled. At least as far as I am concerned, he made the decision to appoint me and then supported me always. I complained to him about the Japanese deputy who was trying to undermine me, and he apparently called the Japanese ambassador and spoke to him. I was quite impressed that he did. I explained to him about the deputy because he

had appointed him. I thought it was quite brave of him. But he was not very charismatic, and never really understood population issues or gender issues.

When Boutros-Ghali came, he asked each one of us to make recommendations on reform and so on. He listened very carefully. I remember each of us had to make a presentation to him on what we thought. I was saying the same thing about the UN field officers and so on, that there should be one head. Also, I said that we all have the UN, but then we have something else after that and that part was more important. Somehow, the UN should become capital in the acronym, and FPA should be very small. In UNFPA, for example, UN was less important than FPA. Somehow we had to become more UN and less something else. But the reasons why we were the way we were was the need for visibility. We needed our funding. Boutros was quite brilliant, I thought.

RJ: Intellectually.

NS: Intellectually, yes. I think he did a lot of his own speeches. I think he didn't suffer fools, so he was very brusque. He didn't have regular meetings, but had more meetings with all of us than Javier did. Maybe every six months we had a meeting. He tried to do some reform. Remember, he merged everything together, and it was suddenly Mr. Gee, or somebody. He was the czar of the economic and social affairs, and everything. Then WDC and DESA were all merged. Then it was unmerged again. But I am not sure that, as far as reform itself was concerned, he did very much.

RJ: The *Agenda for Peace*.

NS: Was very good. His *Agenda for Development* was not as good. But he had good ideas. Intellectually, he had good ideas. Agenda for Peace was very good, yes. He was very

good at ACC meetings, for example. He participated actively, unlike Javier who read prepared texts and statements.

Then came Kofi, and Kofi was much more brilliant. He knew the system very well and came to each one of our organizations and spent a certain amount of time. He knew UNFPA quite well, because during the population conference, I had had a lot of problems with the controller's office in the UN. He was the assistant-secretary-general, I think, at that time, of administration and finance. The controller was—the U.S. was, at that time, not funding UNFPA. They had promised $500,000 for the conference, but said they couldn't deposit it in the UNFPA, even if we had a separate account. So I said, "We will have a UN account." I said, "A UN account should be opened." The UN wouldn't open the account. They said, "We want this guarantee from them, that guarantee, all kinds of guarantees." I said, "But this is some government giving us the money for the population conference." "Who is the program officer?" I was supposed to be the program officer.

The U.S. was getting quite frantic because September 30th, the deadline, was approaching. They said, "You either want the money or you don't want the money." Finally, I had to ring up Kofi. I didn't know what the logjam was. He had to instruct that the money should be taken. So he knew me a little bit then from all that.

Then the Swedes gave us some money. The money for the conference was being raised from different donors, so they were going to deposit it in the account. The controller's office said how dare I write to the Swedes and accept the money. I said, "Because I negotiated it." "That is not the way," and "We are the UN," and all kinds of strange things like that. I couldn't bring people from developing countries with the money, even though it said that was what the

money was for. They would only pay the travel, they wouldn't pay the per diem because it didn't say per diem. You know how bureaucracy works sometimes.

In the end, I met Kofi. I said, "Kofi, I am opening an account in the UNFPA. It is only to accommodate the U.S. that I opened an account at the UN proper. This is a separate account for the conference, but no further contributions are coming to the UN. This is just maddening." So Kofi had something to do with the conference, or had heard about it, so he knew us very well. Then he had this idea of the reform and set up these various committees. Speth was put in charge.

RJ: Of the UNDG.

NS: Of the UNDG, yes. He wanted to know what should be done, so we came up with the idea of the UN development framework and so on. He was very scared of UNICEF not participating at that time.

RJ: Kofi.

NS: Not Kofi so much as Speth.

RJ: Just finish about Kofi.

NS: He setup the senior management group (SMG), and for the first time all the USGs under him were brought to a senior staff meeting every week. He held that meeting every single Wednesday and had teleconferencing with the USGs in Geneva, and then it was extended to Vienna and even to Nairobi, to UNEP (UN Environment Programme). So in fact, the senior staff all participated. And as he said, whatever the agenda was, we were all to speak in our individual capacity on the subject, not from the point of view of our role. So it was like a real cabinet.

RJ: And that still continues.

NS: That still continues. And at the end, I think, of two years, was the SMG working or not working? We all gave our various assessment. My assessment was that until such time as some issues on which we didn't agree came to the table at the SMG, and then the secretary either at the SMG somewhere made a decision on that difficult issue, the SMG was not working. We were all expressing our views on whatever the topics were. You know it was quite an open and frank dialogue.

But there were many things that were happening outside at the senior level which never got resolved because we were too scared, or we didn't want to upset someone else, or we had to resolve it amongst ourselves. And that continues. It has never been resolved by anyone. This includes the resident coordinator issue. For the development group, we were suggesting that the chairmanship should be a rotating chairperson, not a fixed chairperson.

RJ: Not always UNDP.

NS: Yes, but that was not accepted. Things of that kind. I felt we should have had more open discussion. We should present our views, and the SG could make a decision. Once things were out in the open and a decision was made, then we had to implement it even if we didn't agree. But when it simmers outside and you can still do what you like because no one has really made a decision, problems are never going to be resolved.

RJ: What about the Secretary-Generals and gender issues?

NS: The Secretary-General, I think, is very conscious of gender issues. He makes it a point. One of his first statements was to try to get 50 percent of women in senior positions. He has tried to do that. He does send back—when governments make suggestions, he then asks them to send some women's names. I think he hasn't been very successful in the peacekeeping area or the political affairs area, but not for want of trying. He keeps asking for names. I think

there are some good names, but there are no women generals. But I don't know that you have to be a general to negotiate. You can be just an individual and negotiate very well. But anyway, I think that this is not all within his authority. I think governments have a lot to do with it.

RJ: But in terms of gender, the proportion of women, both in senior positions and in professional positions in the UN, surely over the last twenty years it has changed dramatically.

NS: Boutros-Ghali started this comparison between agencies in the ACC during his time. We had to report on the gender balance and the number of women within our various organizations.

RJ: UNFPA, as I recall, was the highest.

NS: Was the highest, and still I think must be the highest. Well, UNICEF has some up quite a lot, I think. It must be almost 50 percent. Well, we are at 50 percent, and we had 60 percent of our top level staff were women, which was a lot because myself and—

RJ: Looking at the other agencies, or indeed looking at UNFPA and others, what do you think has accounted for the change? What do you think are the big lessons of improving gender balance?

NS: Well, as far as UNFPA is concerned, I think we made a very concerted effort to find women. Even when I became executive-director, I assumed that many women applied for jobs in the UNFPA. But in fact, that was not true. When you ask many women whom you thought could work for the UNFPA why they didn't apply, they say, "Oh, well do you really mean it? Will we really be considered?" I was quite shocked that they would think that they wouldn't be considered.

I set up a little committee inside UNFPA to look at how we could get priority and by whom. They made a most tentative and weak set of recommendations by the year twenty

thousand and something or the other. I said, "When you set up a committee to get to this level in 2010 or 2005, you have to be more bold in your recommendations." So they said, "OK." So they went back. In the beginning, men were a bit worried. They said, "Are you going to only promote women and not men?" I said, "No, I am not going to promote only women. But if the selection is between a woman and a man, all things being equal, then I am going to select the woman. I have to be very honest. But if they are not equal—I mean, if it's a man that is more suitable, then I will take the man. But on the other hand, I am not willing to have any slate of new recruits without some number of women in that slate. So therefore, I want all field officers to send names of women to be included in our list at headquarters, so whenever posts become available we can send them the vacancy and they can apply if they wish to apply."

Suddenly, we started to get a whole lot of applications—because women, I think, realized that they would be considered. Many women, I really believe, do not apply because they think they will not be considered. I think that is a very sad reflection on the UN system. It was also for the UNFPA, where I thought we had all this openness and all that.

We were at about twenty-something percent when I became executive-director—27 or something like that. We were not so low, but we were not as high as 50. But we expanded also our field operations, so that gave us an opportunity to recruit many women. We got other staff in headquarters—technical staff and so on. We managed to get a lot more women recruited into the organization.

I think UNICEF is the next best, as far as the UN system is concerned. UNDP was always quite bad. And even now, the reps in the field are largely men. Even we have not enough. It is much better, but it is not fifty-fifty in the field. That is mainly a spousal problem, because women are willing to leave and join their husbands, but men are not willing to leave

their jobs and join their wives. The spousal recruitment program interchange of finding jobs for spouses between the UN organizations has not been as effective—

RJ: As it should be.

NS: As it should be. We all intend to do it, but somehow we haven't been able to help each other. I think UNICEF has helped, I know, UNFPA out a few times. I had to ask Jim, in fact, to help me with some staff member I wanted to post. He then took the spouse in the UNICEF office. But you know, it takes a lot of personal effort to get it done. It doesn't get done in the normal procedural way. It should be that when you are thinking about appointments, if there is a spouse you should immediately send out that with this appointment there is a spouse involved so that several years, or two years in advance maybe you can find a job for the spouse. But we really haven't done it.

We have a subgroup in this DG reform group as well on spousal employment. There are many ideas there. But they get agreed, but then there is not the implementation follow-up.

RJ: Let me ask you about a much broader issue on the impact of gender concerns in the UN. There is a view that is often put that the most significant impact of gender awareness is employment of more women within the UN, is in all sorts of ways of changing the way development problems—

NS: Are perceived.

RJ: And I presume you are sympathetic with that.

NS: Oh, definitely.

RJ: Which are your good examples where this has shown how—

NS: On that I am not sure I can give you some good examples. I think that in the ACC, for example, when there was just myself in the ACC, and everyone only complimented on how

beautiful I looked and what lovely clothes I wore and so on. It used to irritate me like anything. I started complimenting the men on their lovely suits and their lovely ties. I think they got shocked. But anyway, they never looked at a gender perspective or women's rights issues or anything. In the beginning, when I started to say something, people would look at me like what was I talking about. But you know, after two sessions, the third session, several people mentioned women and then would look at me like, "Have you noted that we have said the word women?"

So it does change, the fact that someone pushes and issues and is there. Other people start to recognize. You make the point that it is half the population, more the half the population in many countries. To talk about having to mainstream more than half the population seems upside down. That is the population that you should be worrying about and the other half should be mainstream, or the less than half, et cetera. So it does carry some weight. It is logical, but it is not always thought about in that logical way.

I will tell you my own experience in the UNFPA, because I thought that as I am the head and I know everybody in UNFPA, and I pronounce and it is done, huh? What a shock I got in Beijing. This was so many years later, after so many training programs. The programs used to come and I used to often look at the beginning of the programs after all the guidelines had gone out. There was no attention to women's rights, gender issues, how did women think about about some program or another. The field would say, "Well, we don't know how to do it. How do we identify this?"

The simplest things they didn't know how to do. We ran so many training programs. Every training program had gender, gender, gender. I was on a bus going from the Beijing conference back to the hotel. I got in before anyone else, and I was sitting at the back of the bus

so nobody knew that I was there. During the thing, I was in fact dozing off. I was not talking because there was nobody sitting next to me. Then I hear a loud voice of somebody saying to someone else, "So-and-so, have you been genderized yet?" Then the other person said, "I have been genderized once. Maybe it's coming to me again." I woke up and I thought to myself, "My God, this is what they think about gender? They are making fun of it." To me, that was the worse thing that could have happened. If you start to make fun of something, it means it's trivial, it's unimportant, it's somebody's whim and fancy. It is not serious.

RJ: These were two men.

NS: Two men, yes. I didn't say anything at that point. When we came back to New York, and we were having an executive-committee meeting and reviewing Beijing, I said, "Well, you know, I find that gender is not really mainstreamed in UNFPA, and I am very disturbed about it." People said, "Oh, no, no, no." I said, "I overheard a conversation, and one of the persons was in the executive committee." I think that had a huge effect, because after that we took it that this was not really getting into the consciousness. I think then changes started to happen, because I described—I was so angry, actually, also—that all staff performance plans had to say what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. Then that would be measured every six months. Their performance report would reflect how they had actually done.

That had a huge effect. Nobody could be promoted if there was any mention that they had not been sensitive to gender issues. So you know, one had to take draconian measures.

RJ: All of this was after Beijing.

NS: This was at the time of Beijing. I wouldn't say that all of UNFPA was like that, but obviously there were some sections that were still of that mindset—that these were unimportant issues. So what I am saying is that these are such ingrained—people have been brainwashed in

their cultures and their societies and all that. You know, Asians and African men really come with that background in which women serve and men take. It's an attitude. They have been brought up in it. And it doesn't just change like that. I would get some veneer of it. Many Asian men say to me, "You are an Asian woman," like, "How have you betrayed your—"

RJ: Tradition.

NS: Yes. They are not actually saying it, but they think I am western. I said, "I am hardly western. I am the least western in the sense of you thinking about western." I said, "You are Neanderthal. Really, you haven't changed at all. With all the education, you haven't changed." But he is so supportive of the fact that I work and do whatever it is.

RJ: Were you worried about his support, in general?

NS: In the beginning, as I said, I followed him around wherever he went. I never thought twice about it. But you know, in the job at the Planning Commission, I traveled all over. That was part of the job. You had to go to East Pakistan every two months. Six times a year I went to East Pakistan, and he never complained. I went to international conferences, and so on. Many women actually, in Pakistan, didn't do those kinds of things. We had visitors from abroad. I took them to lunch or to dinner, and the club, and things like that.

I remember the first time I took someone from the Ford Foundation, some man that had come from New York. I took him to dinner, and someone said, "Who are you with?," like, "Where is your husband?" I said, "He is home." I got very surprised looks. "Does he know?" "Of course he knows. Why shouldn't he know?" All those things happened to other women. He just never, ever stopped thinking that what I wanted to do was right. And I never, ever had the feeling that I couldn't do something that I wanted to do.

When I came to New York, of course, that was a big decision. I had really, initially, only come back for a year or two. We thought it would be good for the children to go to university. A couple of them were going to be at university age. But once we came here and started, the children were in school and whatnot. Then he said, "Maybe the time has come for me to think about coming here." He had a difficult time in the beginning. In the beginning, he commuted for a couple of years. Then he was Caltex Oil Company. He was the general manager of Caltex in Pakistan. They had their headquarters here, so they posted him here. Then the headquarters moved to Houston. He had to find a job. It was not so easy. It took him a while to find a job. He took a job in Saudi Arabia for one year. So you know, it was a tough time where he was settled in a career and a path and was the main breadwinner, so to speak. Suddenly, he was looking for a job. But he did find a job, but my job was more well-known and important than his.

But he's very self-assured. Nobody even thinks about it. I am sure other people might think about it, but he never even—I don't think it bothers him at all. Anyway, that is something I obviously take for granted. But I think if I didn't have it, I think I would have had a difficult time doing whatever it is that I am doing.

RJ: One of the questions we have is when do you foresee a female Secretary-General in the UN?

NS: I think in the not too-distant future. I really believe that there will be a woman secretary-general soon. Already people like Mrs. Brundtland and all are being talked about. [Sadako] Ogata was talked about earlier. It is going to be an Asian turn, supposedly, the next time. I don't see any Asian women. I'm not sure who. I don't think it will be in the next term,

but I think in the not too-distant future. Maybe after the next Secretary-General there might be a woman.

You know, also there is a certain backlash, as you might have heard, in the UN system. I mean amongst governments in the UN about women's rights. It's linked very much to reproductive—

RJ: Male secretariat members.

NS: Not the secretariat, in the governments. In the UN conferences and meetings and discussions, it's, "Maybe it's the western agenda that has gotten pushed too far and is being imposed on us culturally." Of course, it is a way to hide behind their control of women and to perpetuate it. But the way they put it is, "It's an assault on our culture and our way of life, which is so wonderful. Our family structure is so wonderful. The western family has disintegrated. We don't want the same to happen to us."

Partly it is also that the western countries overdo this, that "We are these human rights keepers. We are these perfect people. The South is so bad. You are corrupt. You are this and that." They also got sick of hearing that all the time. In the Durban conference (World Conference on Racism), one of the things that was being said was, "We are sick to death of the North telling us how bad we are. We were civilized before they were ever civilized." You know, that kind of thing, which is not in the UN language those kinds of words are often used.

Gender issues are moving and going forward, but also those countries that in fact resist this advance are also then against women being prominent in positions of power and authority. So that might have an effect as far as the Secretary-General position. The Secretary-General is the most political appointment, so maybe it will have an effect. But it is a small group of countries that are leading this backlash. And there are several Muslim countries in this group as

well—Libya, Sudan, Syria, sometimes. It comes out very strongly when reproductive health and rights are discussed. In the Cairo Plus Five, they didn't want reproductive rights for girls. It was alright for boys, but not for girls.

That really epitomized how they think, "Girls cannot. In our societies, girls don't have those rights and don't want those rights." I said, "But what you are saying is, 'If they have the rights, they are going to somehow behave badly and misuse it, or whatever,' while in fact women don't, in fact. Maybe men do, but women don't." But they are not willing to allow women the equality to make decisions for themselves. Somehow they have to be controlled because somehow women—I don't know what it is. They are weaker, and therefore they are more influenced. I'm not sure what the motivation is, but the underlying motivation is that women must be controlled.

RJ: Let me ask you now to take some fifty year perspectives on population, on women's issues, on gender—the issues with which UNFPA has been concerned. When you look back to the situation in 1945, and compare it with where we have come to today, what do you see that is really significant in these areas of population, women and gender?

NS: I think that as far as the population is concerned, the family planning part of the issues—if you can call them that—started actually with the rights of women and started in the NGO sector. The UN only was marginalized involved. The UN only did studies on population. That it did from the beginning. The Population Division did studies, and there was always a Commission on Population which looked at these studies. It was a scientific commission.

The South Asian countries, in fact led by India, started to look at their population numbers as an impediment in their prospects for social-economic development. India was one of the first countries then to introduce family planning as a way of addressing fertility issues, or

reducing fertility levels. India and Sri Lanka—in fact, Sri Lanka had the first assistance program from Sweden in this area. Pakistan also followed very soon after, in the early 1950s, with the Family Planning Association—the NGO being the prime mover of family planning programs in many countries around the world.

In the 1950s, only very few countries had family planning as part of a national program. India was one of the countries. Pakistan started. Sri Lanka introduced it in its health system part of maternal-child health. All the other countries had no family planning program or no demographic perspective at all until the 1960s. Then many studies came out from the Population Council, from Princeton University—*The Population Bomb* and all that. All those studies started to have an influence, at least in the Asian countries, and some African countries of North Africa—like Egypt and Tunisia, Kenya as well.

In Africa, the English-speaking countries were much more progressive and advanced as far as population issues were concerned. The French-speaking countries were very much behind, as well as the Southern African countries, except a little bit for Zimbabwe, which became independent so much later. By the 1960s, several of these countries in Asia had started to introduce family planning programs, but you know they were still controversial. There was some opposition to them. They were very method-oriented. The IUD was, in fact, pushed by most of the programs—in Korea, in Taiwan, even in Thailand. The IUD was the method of choice also in Indonesia. Even in Egypt and Tunisia this was the method of choice, which was of course a big mistake, to have a method dictate.

In India, also, sterilization was introduced. These camps were suggested, and they held vasectomy camps. Even then, later on, tubectomy camps were held, which also put the program in disrepute, because those that had had a vasectomy were paid a certain amount of money, and

then the people who performed the vasectomy were also given money. So it was felt that the poor were being bought.

RJ: In retrospect, is that clearly a big mistake?

NS: I think the mistake was to have methods as the approach, not family planning as the objective. I think that is the lesson we learned over thirty years, that you should teach people about why planning of a family is important—it effects your health, et cetera—and how you can do it, and give them all the information, but really leave the choice. What was happening was that, when they rejected the method, they also rejected the concept of family planning. So in fact, you lost many people who wanted actually to plan because they thought that family planning was linked with the method, rather than family planning as an intellectual goal and you could find all these methods on how to achieve it.

Also I think that the links between other sectors of development and fertility, even though there were all these wonderful studies on the determinants of fertility—but somehow the only determinant that was used in this strategy was access to family planning information and services, rather than education, for example, or better health. There was not that much attention in the initial determinants on the status of women.

RJ: Now donor pressure—was that the way developing countries—

NS: No, I think those were the studies of the UN. Remember, they did those determinants of fertility studies. I think the models were not very good. At that time, statistical analysis methodology was not so well-developed. The computers were not there. Even when we started with the first computers, it was not easy to get separate variables inputted—

RJ: Into a regression analysis.

NS: So I think the methodology was not there. So I think the best was done. In the case of family planning programs, because Pop Council was very much involved, they introduced a research-based approach to planning which was that every country should have a KAP study—knowledge, attitude, and practice study—before they should introduce. The knowledge on how to design the information and education program, and the attitude—how to design the program to change that attitude. So it was quite scientific and had a good basis.

But you know, the method of collection of the survey data was a little bit flawed. Many people had never been asked these questions, like "What size family do you want?" I remember, in Pakistan, the woman would look at you and say, "How many do you think should be my answer?" So if she said, "six," and you said, "six?," she said, "no, four." I myself remember doing some interviews and saying, "I am not sure that this is the best way to get what the person really feels, especially as you are looking to them with a question which they have never thought about before. They have never thought about planning." So the question should have been, "Do you know that you could have planned the number of your children?" Then maybe they would have started to think, "Oh, well if you could do it, then how many would I have?" But if you ask the question, "How many children would you like to have?," as a first question, then the answers—"I am not sure. Maybe six, maybe eight. I don't know how many God will give me."

Anyway, what I am saying is that we learned all this in the doing. But I think the approach was a right approach because it was an analysis and data-based approach to planning. But some of the tools were a little bit flawed because in our countries people are not very educated. Some of these tools had been developed in other situations where, in fact, people were educated. They had their views, while in Asia, for example, where I worked, nobody thought about planning their future so much. It was the next day that you planned for kind of thing.

Anyway, these were all the lessons that you learned cumulatively, because there were a lot of people that were actually doing research, and writing monographs and books and so on, on what worked, and what didn't work, and how it worked, and so on. So I think that the programs kept learning and improving from those experiences. I think that, in the Bucharest conference—the first Bucharest conference—John D. Rockefeller, who had been the pioneer, who set up this Population Council, and had been a great proponent of population programs, and still continued to be, and also of family planning, then came up with this linking of population and development. You know the population lobby, or the population proponents, got very upset that this was somehow a rejection of family planning. But in fact, what he was saying is what has come out in the Cairo agenda—that population should be part of development programs, not as something separate that will then affect development as an external factor, that these were all part of development strategies that needed to be addressed at the same time.

That voice was—and then "development is the best contraceptive." So somehow it put development and population at odds with one another. Then, when we came to the Mexico conference—it was the 1974 conference. We spent a lot of time on this—couples and individuals, and all that, but in 1984, I spent a lot time trying to get women's issues in a separate section in the Mexico document. You know, that was a very difficult task. It was not easy to get anyone to listen to that women had some needs. A few responded, "We have a section on women in the population conference." It was still the conference on population, so they didn't want a women's section. But there are some recommendations in that.

Then, in Cairo, it became the International Conference on Population and Development. So there all these ideas got much more expanded and accepted. So in the fifty years, we changed a lot from a program which was top-down, that needed to reduce fertility from this to this, and

growth rates from whatever to this number, by so-and-so—many countries had twenty year prospectuses, and you do it by providing maybe the method most suitable for the population which is illiterate, et cetera, and therefore you don't need to have to support it—to an approach where, in fact, you did respond to individual needs, but many shades weren't in the changes of different kinds of programs. Eventually, which we still haven't done fully, is how to have men fully integrated and part of the reproductive health program. That has been a huge evolution.

While demographic policy is a logical responsibility of governments to have, and to maybe even set goals for their population in relation to their developments goals, but their implementation has to be based on individual needs and individual responses, rather than a decision at the top of what is suitable for the individual. That is, you know a whole circle around. I think that is, in a way, what you were asking me earlier. The demographic people think that we have moved away from the central goal, which should have been to reduce numbers, and give population a central place in development, that we have moved to the individual and made the individual then the central place in development and taken away the importance of the numbers.

RJ: Can you say how important individuals have been in the UN, as opposed to governments pressing the UN, or other sources of ideas? Where has the UN gained its energy from in the last twenty years?

NS: Many individuals have played a very important role in making change happen in the UN system. Maybe the idea, for example, for the women's conference came from some group of governments who thought gender issues were now important and then pressed it through the system. But the fact that the conference was held—and then what came out of the conference was the result of the individual. I remember Mrs. Helvi Sipila from the first women's conference

running around the world and talking about how few women members of parliament there were, how few women ministers there were, and put this into a book at the end—a statistical listing of women and their lack of presence at the policymaking table and so on. I think this had a huge effect when you started to think about it, that half the world's population was not reflected in the decision-making processes which affected their lives.

Then many individual researchers took on these themes, then elaborated and developed them. The development perspective, or women, and so on—women's studies centers were set up after the 1975 conference in many universities around the world.

RJ: Would you see that as being an initiative outside the UN?

NS: It's outside the UN, but as a result of the international conference. I think suddenly there was this awareness that this was something missing. There was a shortcoming. I think that it stimulated a lot of actions that took place outside of the UN system, which then helped elaborate on these issues to provide data, or knowledge, and a basis for arguing the case. It also influenced human rights commissions discussions on gender issues. The quotations always came from the women's conference and what they had said on these issues.

Even just the collection of data—we, for example, started to finance the census office. Everything that we financed must be gender disaggregated. This was not the norm in the statistics office. Data was collected for the population, but not broken down by women and men, or girls and boys. But then this became the norm. Now it looks like it was always there. It's logical, isn't it? But it was not there to start with in the 1970s.

So what I am saying is that individuals have been the trigger, the catalyst. They had the effect of being outside the system, and after that the UN has drawn from outside the system. It doesn't have the capacity to do the research, to do the analysis itself, necessarily. It has the

capacity to generate it. As far as gender issues in the UN are concerned, I think women were very much—I found that when I came to the UN that I was better treated in Pakistan as a woman official than I was in the UN. When I first came to the UN, I used to think, "Where have I come to?," because I used to go to meetings. Often you are the only woman, but they would pay no attention to you except to say how lovely your clothes were or how nice you looked. When you made a suggestion, generally people ignored me. Then I started to say, "I said this first," or something of that kind. I found myself becoming a little more aggressive, and maybe even strident sometimes. It was very frustrating.

I think that in Pakistan, women don't have that much opportunity. But once you get a position, then your status goes with your position. Nobody disputed that you were whatever you were—the head of the health section or the head of the clinic or whatever it was. You got the respect for that position. I never had any difficulty dealing with men, or a room full of men, even in the Planning Commission. There were mostly men; there were not many women in our Planning Commission. But in the UN, in the beginning, I felt very much like there was a difference between women and men. But in the UNFPA, Salas was a very good mentor. I think he did a lot, as far as women are concerned.

In general, I would say that all the UN issues where the UN has made a difference have come from individuals. Like Jim Grant—he made a huge difference in UNICEF, especially in children's health. But you know the work he based his advocacy on came from outside the UN. He commissioned the CDC, or he commissioned individuals and so on—maybe even people in the UN system. That is, in fact, also what UNFPA did. It commissioned studies with people outside of the system, or even in the system, but commissioned them because it thought that

these were important studies. And that's where the catalyst, or the energy comes from, from the fact that you can then use it to make a case for your advocacy.

I am just trying to think of other individuals that made a difference. There are many individuals who have made a difference, like Maurice Strong, I think, for the environment conference. He made a difference because he went and talked to everybody. The environment was not a good word. At first, nobody understood what it was about. Then, when they did understand, it was like something was going to be imposed on them. But he managed to get a consensus at the Stockholm environment conference, but he did it with his ideas and his drive and his initiative. He is much quieter than most other people, but many of the ideas came from him, which he might have collected from outside.

I think the UN has—it is individuals who have made a big difference. And those individuals that have—one advantage in the UN is that you have access to everything, because most organizations would like to be associated with the UN. Academics would like to have research that the UN has used or that the UN has asked them to do. So you have this access, and you have in a sense this command that we, I think, are not able always to use. I think then when you have a person that can use it, it can give tremendous results. That is why I think the importance in reform is to have the right people in the right jobs.

RJ: Do you think the UN is misunderstood? Do you think it is under-appreciated, in general, in the world?

NS: I think the UN is known only for its political work in the world. I think the political problems that the UN has to deal with are very much in the public focus. There the UN has not been as successful because the UN is not fully in control. Decisions are made in the Security

Council and there are a lot of politics, and power politics, that drive those decisions. Yet, the UN is always blamed.

Just a recent example—the Security Council resolution that was, I think, maybe initiated by the U.S. on sending an investigation team to Jenin. The Secretary-General did not suggest it, even though he might have thought about it. But he responded, and he put together a very good team. The team languished in Geneva because the host country wouldn't allow it to come. In the end, the Secretary-General reported that he couldn't send the team and then asked the Security Council, "What should I do?" Now the governments are supposed to take some action. They are supposed to say, "Well, we will sanction, or we will do this, or we will tell them, or we will pass a resolution." They didn't do anything. I have heard so many questions to me, "Why did the Secretary-General back down on this team?"

RJ: And it was presented in the newspapers as him backing down.

NS: And it is totally wrong. I keep trying to explain to people that the Secretary-General didn't initiate it. If he did, then he has backed down. But he didn't initiate it. He carried out instructions. He reported back to the Security Council. Now the Security Council is supposed to do something. You know, just last night I was at a dinner, and some professor who is teaching diplomacy, or something, at the Center for International Relations and Diplomacy somewhere, was saying, "Oh, the UN has backed down, and I am teaching. The UN is my subject this summer." I said, "Well, you don't even know then what you are teaching your students." This really is false. He was quite upset with himself. I said, "You don't recognize how the UN works. You have to start from the beginning. How did the Secretary-General set up this commission?"

Anyway, this is how the misperceptions about the UN are presented. And the public doesn't know enough about the UN, especially the public in the United States because there is not that much teaching of the UN as a subject in schools in the United States. So they don't know very much about it. They just believe what is being presented to them. Even in the case of Somalia, where the UN has been so maligned—but the UN didn't start the operations in Somalia.

RJ: But sticking to the economic and social, what would be your ways to get the successes of the UN in the economic and social arena better understood?

NS: For one thing, I think that we should try to present a bigger picture than just individual projects, like polio is eradicated. I think these are big news, but I think we need to serve more. We haven't presented the picture of the fifty years of the UN and what has happened in the development field. That is a huge success story. Look at life expectancy, where it was and where it is today. Infant mortality, child mortality, even educational levels and so on, even gender issues and where they were, and what rights women had in 1945, and what they have today—it's a huge, huge success story. But it is not shown concisely somewhere. And you know, when you are living it, you don't see the success.

Then we present our successes in the development in terms of individual organizations or individual projects, rather than as a system-wide thing. So we could write on a sector and say, "In the health field, all of these organizations worked and did the following things. And it's a huge story. It's not just smallpox or just this or just that, but a lot more."

RJ: We hope this UN project will try and do exactly this.

NS: But you know, in the reform, I think we should recommend that at the country level they should present the whole UN picture at year.

RJ: And each country.

NS: And each country. In each country we should present this every year—what has the UN done. And maybe at the international level, this will be picked up by regions or by the global. This, again, could be and should be part of the reform process, how to present what the UN has done together. Give credit to individual organizations, but the first presentation should be the UN as a system.

RJ: Let me ask you this, in particular, with respect to Pakistan, because when we finished your own experiences in the 1960s in Pakistan, you were saying the UN seemed to be very inefficient. They didn't really follow through. They promised experts, but they didn't always come and so forth. If you looked at the fifty years of Pakistan experience, do you think you would get a more positive view of the UN's contributions?

NS: Oh, I think that we have learned a lot in the last so many years. I think that one of the things that we have learned is that you should have a program which should be delivered *in toto*, not in little bits and grabs, as was the initial things. We were one of the first programs the UNFPA supported. I think the UNFPA didn't know how to operate either. It didn't have any country offices. It didn't have any country representative. The agencies came and went. At that time, Pakistan had an established program. So in fact, it knew much more than any of those people that came in and out. Now we have established offices. I think that makes a huge difference. The difference between the organizations that can implement and those that can't is the fact of a field presence and a field office. I think that makes a huge difference.

RJ: But if you looked at Pakistan as a whole and imagined someone going there and saying, "What has the UN as a whole contributed in all sorts of different ways to Pakistan from the beginning?," what sort of an assessment do you think that would give of the perspective of the UN's practical contributions to Pakistan?

NS: I'm not sure that that would be a very good picture because Pakistan has had so many other problems unrelated to the UN as a system. I think the UN system role will not be seen—nothing very special will be seen as the contribution of the UN. If I see anything else as a visible contribution of the UN, I would say in the human rights and in the gender issues area—there I think the UN has certainly made a difference. Human rights because of the conventions and so on—I think that the NGOs have been quite empowered to use those conventions to address issues.

RJ: And the global conferences?

NS: And the global conferences. When I say conventions, in fact also I mean the global conferences. They have used those very much to move forward. I think on gender issues, in spite of the fact that we think we haven't done much, I think we have advanced a lot. Many of the issues that were not appropriate for discussion publicly are now in the public arena. These things like honor killings and the rights of women and even some of the laws and so on are under attack. I think they will be removed because of the pressure of international agreements and conferences.

But I am trying to think in the development field what I would say. I am not sure. There was a very good program, the Social Action Program. But that was taken over by the Bank and the Bank had this big funding of it. Since then it is in disarray. That was where all the social sectors got bundles up—education, health, population, gender were all under this one huge Social Action Program. It has not made the impact that it should have made.

RJ: Our project is called the UN Intellectual History Project. Do you have any views on the importance of ideas which have been promoted through the UN, as opposed to ideas coming out of the universities or ideas coming out of the work of the foundations?

NS: I think population work has always come from outside of the UN. The UN did these studies, but the real change, like being more involved in action programs, happened because outside organizations put a lot more pressure on the UN, but also on governments. I think the work of the Pop Council, the work of many of the scholars at Princeton University, at Stanford University influenced very much the eventual outcome of setting up a UNFPA and having a population program. Those influences came from outside because, in fact, many members of the UN itself resisted it. Then some governments within the UN system then took it on, and that's how it came into being.

I think it always needs the ideas, and then some person to move it along, and then someone receptive where, in fact, the decision is to be made, also then to buy the idea. So in the end, I suppose it comes down to individuals. The ideas may come from anywhere, but unless you find an individual who can use those ideas and put them together and make it possible for the UN as a system to accept it or act on it, it will not happen. I think this must be the same for many areas, many issues. It is not so easy to locate when these changes actually happen, but I am sure that if one could, there must be a time period where, in fact, all these things came together.

I think in the population field, it was all the ideas and the studies that were coming out from the outside. Then someone like General Draper, and maybe Prime Minister Kiechi in Japan, and others who got together and felt that these were important ideas that needed some action, and how to have the action—that the best place would be in the UN. That is how the whole idea germinated and took fruit in the sense of the UNFPA being set up and the funds being provided for that.

RJ: Thinking personally, if I may, at the very end, what are you most proud about, or most pleased about your own leadership in the UN?

NS: Well, I am not sure I accept that. For me, as I grew in my own ideas, the ideas of work that I was involved in seemed also to be the areas of work of the organizations. So my personal views and my institutional views or goals were, in fact, the same. So I was totally committed to the UNFPA because I also was totally committed personally to the same goals. I am not sure that everyone is that fortunate. So I see that as my achievement in the sense of moving from this top-down to the individual needs approach. And based on a logical evolution and a facts-based approach, it is not just my view or my feeling, but it has a basis in fact, on the basis of analysis, and data, and so on. And I think on the basis of results, because since Cairo, in fact, a lot more governments have put more money into their own programs than they did before Cairo. I am talking about national governments. So this means that they also believe that this approach is the right approach.

I am also pleased with the fact that gender issues seemed to become very central, not just for population but for all sectors of development. We did a lot of advocacy, and many people used to think the UNFPA finances women's programs. I used to tell them, "No, we don't finance women's programs. We just advocate for women's rights because it helps women's programs." We supported a few things, like micro-credit, as pilot projects, but not as our main. But even that, we spent 5 percent of our funds on these inter-linked projects which would show that empowering women was a way also to get them to have control over their fertility and reproductive health decisions.

So those things I feel quite happy about. And sometimes I am pleased that I managed to get some governments to change their views.

RJ: Well, thank you very much. I think that is a wonderful record in this area.

NS: I wanted to say something about resources—how governments agree on resources and then never come up with them. I think that's true, because in Cairo we spent a lot of time on costing what it would take to implement the Cairo recommendations, at least the population and reproductive health.

RJ: $17 billion, as I recall.

NS: $17 billion by the year 2000, yes. Two-thirds was to come from the developing countries themselves, and I think $5.7 billion from the developed countries, which was not such a huge amount of countries. The developed countries got very upset with me in the five-year review that why did I say the developing countries were keeping their part while developed countries were not? I said the same basis that we had for the costing figures in 1994 was the basis we used in 1999. But they said, "The developing countries are doing better than us?" I said, "Actually they are." In percentage terms they were doing better.

RJ: In terms of an increase in their contributions.

NS: Yes.

RJ: And this was particularly Asia, or was it everywhere except Africa?

NS: No, all countries. Even in Africa they increased proportionately. The volume was not that large, so even the percentage may have been large, but the base was very small. The bulk of the $5.7 billion was, in fact, for Africa. All the large country programs were going to spend their own money. No external donor was going to provide in India and China and even Mexico. They spent their money. So the countries that needed the money were the African countries. Several donors still told me that that could not be true. We gave that study of analysis

of how much countries went to—NIDE, the Netherlands Institute of Development Economics, came up with the same—

RJ: They confirmed the figures.

NS: And they in fact do this every year. Every two years they collect the data on what amount of money is going to the population program from donors and from recipients. So that was one of the things I was quite disappointed with, that they agreed. They said it was not a commitment. No conference recommendation is a commitment. It is not a legal commitment, but it was in my view an ethical and moral commitment. When we agreed on the recommendations, then the resources go with it. On the 0.7 percent, the same thing. There is all this discussion and the U.S. rejects it all the time. I am glad now that the UK and Germany have finally agreed.

RJ: After Monterrey.

NS: Yes. But now at Monterrey, everyone has agreed, but I am not sure that they are going to come up with the resources. They always seem to find excuses for not being able to give development resources, when at the drop of a hat they can find money for wars. It is really upsetting. And as Jim and I discussed once, we thought that the world has got so much money and so much resources, and what we need is a little tiny bit of it to get everybody with some level of living. And we are not able to do that. So that is why I think resources are very key.

RJ: As we were saying over lunch, the conventional wisdom presented time and time again by the industrial countries is that the developing countries don't follow through. They are not serious, et cetera.

NS: That's not true.

RJ: And if you look at the records, so often it is the—

NS: The developed countries. In the population field, we have certainly demonstrated this for the five-year review. And they were really upset. Several donors came to see me personally to say that I shouldn't say this. It was very embarrassing for them. I said, "I am terribly sorry, but it is very embarrassing for me also that you haven't come up with the resources. I have to say it." But it is a fact.

RJ: Well, thank you again.

NS: Thank you.

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