

Abortion pact goes to full conference

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CAIRO, Egypt — The Vatican gave up its struggle yesterday to significantly weaken language on abortion in a U. N. plan to stabilize population growth, clearing the way for delegates to draft a compromise recognizing that abortions are performed worldwide.

After a five-day standoff, delegates to the International Conference on Population and Development approved a paragraph stating that abortions "should be safe" in countries where the practice is legal.

In a statement read by a spokes-

man, Monsignor Joaquin Navarro-Valls, leader of the Vatican delegation, said it was abandoning its maneuvers over the paragraph's wording because "it does not wish to prolong the present discussion."

It said the church would formally register its objections to parts of the passage when the document is adopted by the full conference Tuesday.

The issue of abortion, forced to the forefront by the Vatican, has tied up the conference for nearly a week as the Vatican sought to excise any language suggesting that abortion was a woman's right.

Some delegates saw the five-day delay in itself as an achievement of

sorts for church officials. But for many, the Vatican's stance suggested it was out of touch with followers.

"The Catholic women of the world do not buy into statements from the elderly celibate clergy," said Dr. Allan Rosenfield, dean of the public health at Columbia University.

In a compromise intended to assure the paragraph's approval, the delegates reversed the order of two sentences but didn't change wording.

As a result of the change, the paragraph now begins with the sentence, "In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning."

In its statement, the Vatican wel-

comed that affirmation. It also sought to emphasize that it recognized safety was an issue in the abortion debate.

"The Holy See recognizes the seriousness of the question of maternal death and the dangers to health connected with abortion," the Vatican said.

Timothy Wirth, U. S. undersecretary of state for global affairs who is leading the U. S. delegation, said that the Vatican was "benign" in the final round. "I think that this is the kind of consensus that you like to come to," he said. "They don't agree with everything in there, and neither do we."