

Sample précis-writing exercise: flawed summary 1

This summary is too long (the instructions specified 300-350 words). Expressing the main points more succinctly and omitting minor details would reduce the length. Awkward wording from the original should not be reproduced in the summary; normal wording can be. The sequence of ideas should stay as it is in the original statement. Although the summary is based on a statement with no paragraph structure, appropriate paragraph breaks should be shown in the summary (with or without indentation). Only the first paragraph needs to be introduced with "the speaker said that....".

Reproducing the speaker's exact words has resulted in awkward grammar.

The speaker said that it is 21 years since the World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen and the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, and poverty eradication remains a global and major challenge. Social exclusion continued to be a challenge in many parts of the world. In an important year for social development. The United Nations member states had adopted further agreements. All stakeholders should renew their commitments to further advance social development by intensifying their efforts to implement Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Inelegant repetition of "challenge"

"Further agreements" is accurate, but alters the emphasis of the original statement.

The speaker said that poverty eradication through people's empowerment had always been the top development priority of his government, whose people-centric model with its seven elements; poverty eradication, education, skill development, elimination of discrimination and extremism, inclusion, participation and employment generation, were guiding it to realize its vision for a poverty-free prosperous country.

This has been taken from the last paragraph of the statement, but the instructions indicate that the order in which ideas are presented should not be changed.

The speaker said that his country had made commendable progress in respect of most of the social indicators in last two decades. It had sustained a GDP growth rate of 6+ percent in recent years and touched the landmark growth rate 7 percent in 2015-16 with robust growth accompanied by corresponding improvement in several social indicators such as increase in the life expectancy (70.4 years in recent years) and lower fertility rate (2.3 in 2014). The population living below poverty line was 12.9 per cent in 2015-16 which was 56.7 per cent in 1991.

The speaker said that the net enrolment ratio in primary school was 97.7 per cent. In addition, gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment had already been achieved. The proportion of the population using safe drinking water and improved sanitation was 98 per cent and 56 per cent respectively.

Unidiomatic original wording should not be reproduced; also, the approach to summarizing this section of the statement has led to a telescoping of the points made, altering the logic and emphasis.

The speaker said that his country continued to underscore the crucial role of international cooperation, including north-south, south-south and triangular cooperation, in realizing the internationally agreed development goals and promoting the Programme of Action of the Copenhagen Summit. A more strengthened, coherent and integrated development approach was needed, including the fulfilment of commitments on internationally agreed official development assistance, and the timely implementation of all commitments under the global partnership for development.

The speaker expressed pleasure that since the proclamation of the International Year of the Family in 1994, the international community continued to undertake a range of activities and commitments in support of its objectives and that the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 provided a useful opportunity to strengthen national family-centred policies and programs.

Shortening a sentence by taking a section from the original statement and then removing words from it should be approached carefully, as the summary needs to be clear and have correct grammar.

It was important to have effective enforcement of labour laws with regard to migrant workers, inter alia, those related to their remuneration, their working conditions and condition of their health, safety of work and right to freedom of their associations. It was also important for all stakeholders to renew their commitments to further advance social development by intensifying their efforts to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for the role of the Commission for Social Development to be strengthened as a potential platform for following up the social dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.

(544 words)

Some wrong tenses here for reported speech. Elsewhere reported speech is correctly used.

Only the first paragraph needs to be introduced with 'the speaker said that'.

A key point – the country's achievements connected with persons with disabilities – has been left out here.

The spelling of words like "centre/center" and "program/programme" should be kept consistent.

As the instructions specify that the original order of ideas should not be changed, this sentence should have been here, rather than be moved to the first paragraph.