

GHANA



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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

**43RD SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE THEME:
HEALTH MORBIDITY, MORTALITY AND DEVELOPMENT**

NEW YORK, APRIL 13, 2010

Mr. Chairman, the Ghana delegation is delighted to have the opportunity to share with members of the Commission, our experiences vis-à-vis the theme – Health, Morbidity, Mortality and Development.

Ghana regards population and health issues as central to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, Ghana's National Health Policy titled "Creating Wealth through Health" recognizes that ill health is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Implementation of this policy, together with other policies and strategies in areas such as Water, Reproductive Health, Contraceptive Security, Gender and Children as well as HIV/AIDS and STI are all geared towards improving the health of every Ghanaian.

Further, Ghana's National Population Policy reaffirms government's commitment to implement appropriate strategies and programmes to manage population resources with the ultimate objective of accelerating the pace of economic modernization and improving the quality of life of Ghanaians. The major health goals of the National Population Policy include:

- Pursuing programmes to reduce high levels of morbidity and mortality and promoting reproductive and sexual health;
- Promoting the health and welfare of mothers and children;
- Integrating family planning services into maternal and child health care services

Mr. Chairman, Ghana has achieved some successes in its health and demographic indicators. Infant mortality has declined from 64 per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 50 per 1,000 live births in 2008. Similarly, under-five mortality decreased from 111 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 80 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008. Life expectancy at birth has also increased from 56.3 in 2000 to 59.8 in 2009 and Total Fertility Rate has declined from 4.4 children in 2003 and 4.0 in 2008. Immunization coverage among children currently stands at 87% and there has been no reported case of deaths due to measles in the country since 2003.

Despite this progress, challenges still remain. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is still unacceptably high at 451 deaths per 100,000 live births. Most of these deaths are due to hemorrhage, hypertension and unsafe abortions resulting from unintended pregnancies. The Millennium Development Goal of achieving a 75% reduction in the level of maternal mortality means that by the year 2015 – barely four years away, Ghana should be recording a figure of 185 deaths or below out of every 100,000 babies born alive but this is unlikely to be achieved if current resource constraints remain unchanged.

In 2008, following the declaration of maternal mortality as a national emergency, H. E., the President declared maternity services free and subsequently, antenatal, delivery and post natal services were included in the National Health Insurance Scheme. In 2009, Ghana launched a Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) as part of the African Union's initiative to increase public awareness on maternal and newborn health issues. The campaign advocated for an increase in resources to address infant and maternal mortality.

Mr. Chairman, much still remains to be done Contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) declined from 19% in 2003 to 17% in 2008. HIV prevalence increased from 1.7% in 2008 to 1.9% in 2009. Malaria continues to be the leading cause of outpatient morbidity in all age and sex groups and a major cause of death among children under five years of age. A high proportion

of infant deaths occur in the first month of life (neonatal period) and still birth rates are not showing any improvements, pointing to the need to improve access and quality of maternity care and newborn care services. The nutritional Status of children shows evidence of improvements in stunting and underweight but also show an increasing trend of overweight and obesity among children and women of reproductive age. In addition, new strains of epidemic prone diseases such as Cerebrospinal Meningitis (CSM) W135 and H1N1 influenza cases have been recorded in some parts of the country.

The fast rate of urbanization with its accompanying urban slums and street children continues to hamper developmental efforts in improving the quality of life of Ghanaians. It is currently estimated that 52% of Ghana's population live in the urban areas. Providing adequate shelter and other social amenities has been prioritized in the Medium-Term Development Framework (2010 – 2013).

In appreciation of the direct and indirect linkages between population, mortality, morbidity and development, the government is pursuing the following actions among others:

- Construction and rehabilitation of health infrastructure nationwide including the establishment of modern regional hospitals for each region;
- The introduction of more training programmes designed to localize medical treatment for which Ghanaians often go abroad;
- Increase the number and intake of midwifery training schools;
- Expansion of the coverage of the National Health Insurance Scheme to bring health delivery to all Ghanaians at an affordable cost;
- Expansion of free medicare to all persons aged 70 years and above and under the National Health Insurance Scheme;
- The implementation of the strategic plans to Reposition Family Planning and accelerate progress on maternal and newborn care;
- Annual Child Health Promotion week, National Immunization days against polio and Safe motherhood Month celebrations;
- Intensification of efforts in epidemic preparedness;
- Pursuing Regenerative Health Programme to promote healthy lifestyles to prevent diseases and ill health and reduce the burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases;
- A policy on the aged has been drafted to ensure improvements in health status among the elderly.

Mr. Chairman, despite these modest gains in our population and health indicators we believe that with the continued support from development partners and coupled with the right public health policy mix, Ghana will continue to improve on its health and development situations to improve the quality of life of its citizenry and advancing national development. We wish also to acknowledge the enormous support received from bilateral and multilateral partners.

Thank you for your interest and attention.