



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Check against delivery

STATEMENT BY THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN AT THE 47TH SESSION OF COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT NEW YORK, 7-11 APRIL 2014

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege to represent on behalf of my delegation, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in this 47th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his three reports to this session of the Commission on Population and Development, which we consider as a critical opportunity to advance Afghanistan's efforts to improve the lives of our people, with equity and dignity; and ensure sustained economic growth and sustainable development that will be further cause for the sustainable peace in the country and the region.

We take this opportunity to welcome the ICPD Global Review Report. We share its conclusion that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity across all sectors is the foundation of sustainable development. The report's focus on the increasing wealth and income inequalities; unfulfilled gender equality and empowerment of women; the need for lifelong learning and building human capabilities especially for young people; addressing the inequalities in universal access to health services particularly, sexual and reproductive health, inter alia, through strengthening health systems both in rural and urban areas; provision of social protection for older populations; and have significant implications for development policy.

Mr. Chairman,

My country notes in this regard the importance of the ICPD Programme of Action for the achievement of national development priorities and we can confirm that considerable progress has been made. Achievements and progress in some of the indicators in my country is commendable; specially, health, education and communication sectors have developed enormously.

Human Rights, including Women's Rights

Afghanistan is State Party to the most of key International Treaties, Covenants, and Protocols of Human Rights that includes, International Convention on the Civil and Political Rights – ICCRP, International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – CAT, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women– CEDAW, International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination – CERD, Convention on the Rights of the Child- CRC.

In this context, Afghanistan is committed to its international obligations, particularly, for promotion and protection of human rights.

Efforts have been made to strengthen women's rights and gender equality in my country. A Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) was established, Elimination of Violence Against Women law was developed, our National Development Strategy (ANDS) contains a Gender Equity Cross Cutting Strategy and a National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan 2008 - 2017 is being implemented cross sectorally.

There have been some extraordinary achievements for girls and women, particularly in education and democratic governance. Currently, there are 3 female ministers, 6 deputy ministers and 1 governor in the executive branch of our Government. 68 out of 249 (27%) parliament members are women.

An Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) is in place as regulator monitoring, reporting on violation of Human Rights in the country as well as mandated for promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission is also being chaired by a woman.

On April 5, 2014 Afghans went for a polling across the country to participate in the Presidential and Provincial Councils election. It was phenomenal to see the enthusiasm in participation of both women and men to determine their future.

Health

Afghanistan is implementing the Reproductive Health Strategy 2012 to 2016 in line with the ICPD. An Essential Package of Hospital Services was also developed to establish a referral system. A Health and Human Rights Strategy has been developed. Ministry of Public Health Afghanistan has approved a patient charter and a guideline on Medical Ethics to ensure all patients receive health care service with dignity. Our national immunization campaign is reaching all provinces and districts, reaching millions of children under the age of five to protect them against polio and other deadly diseases. The coverage of basic health expanded from 9% of the population in 2003 to over 60% in 2013. Life Expectancy increased from 45 years in 2002 to 64 years in 2010. The reduction of Maternal Mortality from 1600 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 327 in 2010 is a major milestone. Under 5 Mortality reduced from 257 per 1000 live births to 97 in 2010.

Education

NRVA 2011-12 indicates that all education-related indicators for Afghanistan – including gender equality indicators – show improvement since NRVA 2007-08, even though at the same time it is observed, that the pace of improvement has slowed down. As part of our national agenda to promote primary, secondary and higher education, we have constructed close to 4,000 school buildings over the past nine years; and we are on track to build an additional 4,900.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite all these major achievements in the last decade, education performance in Afghanistan is still among the poorest in the world. The share of the Afghan population 25 years and over who have completed any level of formal education is very small – less than 25 percent, and for women as few as 10 percent. However, major improvements in primary and secondary school completion are observed for

the younger age group 15-24 years, especially for girls. This is the result of increasing school attendance in the past decade.

Youth

According to the Central Statistics Organization Statistical Year Book 2011-2012, 46.1 % of Afghanistan's population is under 15 years of age and 68 % is under 25 years. The example of other developed countries have shown that this sizable youth population can be turned into a demographic dividend if a country is committed to making its young women and men the focus of its development and poverty reduction strategies. While realizing the immense potential and energy of its young population, the Government of Afghanistan not only develops evidence based policies and programs to address the whole complex set of youth challenges and problems in the country but also makes strategic and well-coordinated investments in youth.

Mr. Chairman,

A multi-sectorial National Youth Strategy is being developed. Special attention is being paid to facilitating youth participation in peace, reconciliation, policy and program development and in other nation building programs. Sexual and reproductive health education had been provided to a large number of youth all across the country through Youth Contact and Information Centers and the inclusion of such programs in the curriculum of high schools is being studied. As a result of advocacy programs the forced marriages had significantly reduced in the past decade.

Mr. Chairman,

Security is the bedrock for socio-economic development, for ICPD PoA, MDGs and future Sustainable Development Goals. In my country the security situation has made it difficult to sustain the hard gained progress.

Towards achieving our goals, and transitioning to post 2015 agenda, both country ownership and international partnerships are essential. These are more important in the case of my country as it is on the eve of transformation decade (2015-2024).

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to reiterate our support for the review of the ICPD Programme of Action, which we see as facilitating further and more effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We look forward to contributing to the negotiations on the draft resolution presented. We expect that the outcome would recognize the results of all the regional review conclusions including the Asia Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, and recommendations of the global ICPD beyond 2014 review. We also believe that the outcome must recognize the linkage between the results of the review and the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

I thank you for your attention.