

**STATEMENT BY OF H.E. Mr. MACHARIA KAMAU, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
KENYA, ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP AT THE 47TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

ITEM 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

April 7, 2014

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour of delivering this Statement on behalf of the African Group.

Twenty years after the adoption of the Cairo Plan of Action, the time has come to take a look back. On this occasion, the African Group would like to express its attachment to the goals and objectives of the ICPD. Remarkable advances have been made in gender parity in primary education, representation of women in decision making, immunization coverage and stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, just to name a few. However, implementation gaps remain and I will only focus on three issues: youth, child and maternal mortality, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Mr. President,

The youth is our future in Africa. In fact, nearly 65% of the African population is under 35 years. And it goes without saying that worrying about their present and ensure social welfare is a guarantee for our country. The challenges are enormous in a gloomy global economy. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that Africa's youth bulge translates into a demographic dividend by: strengthening entrepreneurial capacity; supporting decent and well-paid jobs for young people; increasing access to finance by the youth and promoting youth participation in development processes.

Mr. President,

Too many children and pregnant women still die each year from preventable causes. Access to healthcare professionals during pregnancy and childbirth remains limited. Africa still has the world's largest burden of maternal deaths. There are still more than 358,000 maternal deaths each year in the world, with more than half (53 percent) in Africa. Maternal mortality remains one of the major concerns of our continent. This inventory underscores the need to accelerate efforts to attain the MDGs as well as ICPD goals and objectives. Universal and equitable access to affordable quality healthcare remains critical to improve maternal, new born and child health and to enhance access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

Mr. President,

Africa attaches great importance to gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender equality is of fundamental importance for achieving sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The ICPD Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals have galvanized efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment but we should keep improving and sustaining progress on gender parity at all levels of education; creating a positive environment for girls at school, including increased representation of female teachers; eliminating gender-based wage inequality; increasing women's access to land and other productive assets as well as housing; improving women's access to credit and extension services; improving women's access to skills development and mentoring; access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services; eradicating violence against women and children and harmful practices and eliminating gender-based discrimination in political and decision-making processes.

The African Group is of the view that we should ensure that investment in the empowerment of women and girls has a multiplier effect, in particular on productivity, efficiency and sustained and inclusive economic growth, in all sectors of the economy, especially in key areas such as agriculture, industry and services.

Mr. President,

The focus on the three aforementioned areas does not mean in any way the Group does not pay due consideration to all goals and objectives of the ICPD PoA which remain all relevant.

The Group believes that its goals and objectives remain valid, and that is the reason why the General Assembly, through resolution 65/234, agreed to extend it beyond 2014. It should be recalled that paragraph 4 of resolution 65/234 states that “there will be no renegotiation of the existing agreements contained therein”.

African States wish to reaffirm their commitment to the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action. The African Group wishes to reaffirm the sovereign right of each country to implement the recommendations of the Programme of Action or other proposals in the CPD resolutions, consistent with national laws and development priorities, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights.

The Commission on Population and Development, including its outcomes, should not create any opportunity to consider human rights issues in a non-objective and confrontational manner nor attempt to undermine the international human rights system by seeking to impose concepts or notions pertaining to social matters, including private individual conduct, that fall outside the internationally agreed human rights legal framework.

I thank you.