

**STATEMENT OF THE GAMBIA AT THE 47TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT, NEW YORK
FROM 7 - 11 APRIL 2014**

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, let me congratulate you, and Members of the Bureau on your election to direct the process of this important session. Let me mention that the Gambia aligns itself with the statement presented by the representative of African Group. The Gambia also endorses the UNFPA Global ICPD Review and the Secretary General's report on the **"Framework of Action for the follow up to the Programme of Action of ICPD Beyond 2014"**. Both documents reflect our contributions in the global survey and also the important discussions and agreements reached at the regional review meetings. However, the Gambia wishes to add its voice and share some of our experiences in this important conference.

Mr. Chairman

Since 1994, the Gambia has demonstrated its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. From the onset the government integrated population dynamics into our national policies to ensure population and development issues are adequately mainstreamed into the national development policy frameworks. This has created an enabling environment for the implementation of Programme of Action of the ICPD within the framework of Vision 2020 and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP I and II) succeeded by Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE), covering the period 2012-2015.

Mr. Chairman

The Government of the Gambia in line with the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action strongly believes in the principles of universal access to reproductive health and services, including those relating to HIV/AIDS, and recognizes the right of women and men to be informed and to have access to safe,

effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choices in order to freely decide the number, timing and spacing of their children.

Against this background the government has made significant strides in providing efficient and effective health services to people in the Gambia. Health services are provided to all Gambians, at affordable prices and most importantly the provision of free maternal Health Care for women and adolescents and youth-friendly Reproductive Health Centres in the Regions. This has resulted in steady improvements in our health indicators. The maternal mortality rates have dropped from 730 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2001 to 556 in 2006 and it has now further declined to 433 per 100,000 live births in 2013. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has decreased from 93 in 2005 per 1000 live births to 81 per 1000 live birth as reported in MICS 2010. Under-Five Mortality Rate also declined from 131 per 1000 live births in 2005 to 109 per 1000 live births in 2010. On HIV/AIDS, the Gambia has maintained a lower prevalence rate of infection compared to other countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Under the dynamic and pragmatic leadership of His Excellency The President Sheikh Professor Alhagie Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, a lot of progress has been registered, in addressing gender inequality, equity and the empowerment of girls and women, vis-à-vis, the implementation of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action and other international conventions and protocols.

Now there is marked increase of women participation at decision making levels, more than 80% of women's groups nationwide have benefited from the Revolving Fund administered by Women's Bureau. Women, especially in rural areas are provided with milling machines to alleviate their heavy workload. Literacy rate among women has improved from 43.1 in 2005 to 48.2 percent in 2010. The Government has enacted Domestic Violence Act and Sexual Offences Act 2013 to tackle gender based violence.

Mr. Chairman

The Government of the Gambia sees education as a basic human right that should be accessible to all Gambians irrespective of their gender, religion, disability, ethnicity, age, wealth, and location. In fulfilling these ideal goals, the Gambia has successfully provided basic quality education for all Gambian children. The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) has increased from 88% in 2010 to 90.2 percent in 2012, whilst the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) for girls is 70 percent. These tremendous achievements are registered by adopting strategies to mainstream gender in every stage of our education processes. These include but not limited to the enforcement of 'Sexual Harassment Policy' to address gender-based violence in and around schools, establishing 'Mother Clubs' in schools, teaching of Life Skill Education which includes Population and Family Life Education in schools to help learners acquire not only knowledge and skills but also behaviours that is positive and relevant to their self-fulfilment. The establishment of President's Empowerment of Girls Education Project (PEGEP) by His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhagie Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh has not only provided scholarships for girls at various levels of academic but greatly increasing enrolment, and retention of girls in school.

Mr. Chairman,

With a youthful population, the Gambia has developed various strategies to prepare young people for nation building. The government is investing in their reproductive health, education and skills building and enhancement, and creating employment opportunities for them. Project such as Gambia Priority Employment Program (GAMJOBS), are among many strategies set by government to help improve the lives of young people. The government established youth centres nationwide whereby young people can access different services, including sexual and reproductive health services and information.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite progress made by the country in achieving the objectives of the ICPD admittedly there are some severe constraints of different nature that continue to derail our efforts. The country still experiences high Maternal Mortality and high incidence of infant mortality. Contraceptive use remains low despite high level of awareness. The contraceptive prevalence rate is only 13 percent with an unmet need of 21.5 percent. Due to limited resources, migration, climate change and environmental issues are not fully addressed.

In conclusion I wish to register my profound gratitude to our development partners, especially UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and other multilateral and bilateral partners that have helped the Gambia to achieve its development goals.

Thank you for your kind attention

