



**Statement by
Honourable Charles Abel, MP
Minister for National Planning and Monitoring
of Papua New Guinea**

to the

**47th Session of the Commission on
Population and Development**

8 April 2014, New York



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"Check against delivery"

Mr Chairman;

Excellencies;

Distinguish Delegates; and

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you Chairman,

And a greetings to us all,

Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I want to thank you on behalf of my country, the Secretary General, the Commission, the Population Division and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for all the great work to this point. Thank you for the reports yesterday and thank you to the important people that spoke yesterday in particular those who have been absolute champions to this course.

Mr Chairman,

This is a short country report from Papua New Guinea and I am the National Planning Minister – responsible for our short and long term development plans and development budget.

Papua New Guinea is a country in the Pacific with a land mass of about the same size of Thailand, a population of 7.8 million, the third largest rainforest in the world, 15 percent of the worlds tuna, 7 percent of the worlds biodiversity, 800 languages, and huge mineral and gas reserves.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite issues and failings of the past we are determined to play our part in providing solutions in a rapidly changing world.

This contribution must be action based and must start with us all as individuals. I, as an individual and a husband and father make a personal commitment to set in a loving and responsible manner to my wife and children. This means, amongst other things, not having too many children, thus taking better care of the ones I do have.

As a leader in my country, I make a personal commitment to pursuing a people based, responsible development policy pathway, supported by timely actions and interventions.

Mr Chairman,

Our Plan of Action for Population and Development must be based on human dignity and fundamental rights rather than numbers and statistics.

The Population question however has also to be viewed in the broader context of a world groaning because of a human footprint it is finding harder and harder to sustain.

There is a broader sustainable development context that must be emphasized. The fundamental values that underpin the requirement for a paradigm shift in development thinking are inextricably linked to the principles behind the Plan of Action- that of respect for humanity and in fact respect for all forms of life rather than on obsession with growth, wealth accumulation and the dollars.

I want to quote from paragraph 7 of the ICDP Program of Action, and I quote "...that an early stabilization of world population would make a crucial contribution to realizing the overarching objective of sustainable development", end of quote.

The Program of Action rightly emphasizes the need to integrate population concerns into development strategies and planning. Today, more than ever, this still remains fundamental to poverty eradication, food security, adequate shelter, employment, gender equality and empowerment, human rights protection and basic services for all. It provides a basic building block for improved quality of life for the present and future generations.

Mr Chairman,

It is noteworthy that the current Post-2015 Development Agenda discourse within the United Nations is synonymous with the ICPD's core principles and objectives. For the international community to realize the next set of global sustainable development goals, population management and stabilization must remain at its heart.

As we commemorate this year the 20th Anniversary of the ICPD's Program of Action, Papua New Guinea fully subscribes and recommits to its fundamental principles and objectives.

We unequivocally support the September 2013 Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference outcome adopted in Thailand, which inter alia underlined the imperative of sexual and reproductive rights, especially for women and girls as well as access to modern forms of contraceptive measures as an integral part of the population and development agenda. These are fundamental human rights.

We also share the views of the 2013 policy recommendations of the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD beyond 2014 on sexual and reproductive rights.

In our region of the Pacific, Papua New Guinea reiterates full support for the Moana Declaration on Population and Development adopted by Pacific leaders in Fiji last year. Likewise, we also support the Montevideo Declaration.

Mr Chairman,

Let me now turn to my Government's perspective on population and development issues in my country - Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea, over the last decade, has achieved a sustained high level of economic growth rate of 6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). My Government is confident that by 2015 the GDP growth rate will reach the projected and unprecedented 21 percent based on the sale of the first gas from the Papua New Guinea Liquefied Natural Gas Project.

Despite the impressive economic growth generated from our abundant natural endowment, Papua New Guinea's human development indices remain unflattering. We are failing to convert this growth into inclusive social and economic gains. We continue to face high maternal mortality and fertility rates, unacceptable levels of gender based violence, governance concerns, prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, high rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and growing rural-urban migration.

Mr Chairman,

In response to this, the two year old O'Neill-Dion Government has taken a bold decision for a paradigm shift under the just launched **National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development**. A key cornerstone is a people-centered population management and stabilization focus.

It entails empowering individuals especially families and communities to take leadership and full responsibility to improve their lives and livelihoods through appropriate intervention measures including responsible parenthood.

This also requires the appropriate valuing and management of our strategic natural assets such as forests, marine resources, water and biodiversity for a future green-growth economy, where foreign capital investment strengthens sustainability of the resources instead of decimating them. These assets are strategic because they are of global significance.

It will also reposition Papua New Guinea as a leader that provides solutions to the world in terms of climate stability, clean air, clean energy security, food security and a model of truly sustainable development. We will be relying on our traditional Development Partners to support us in this regard in avoiding the temptations of continuing to follow the Brown path development model.

In embracing our new development paradigm shift, this will foster "Papua New Guinea Ways" and provide a transformative sustainable development pathway that recognises our historical past and build a new strategic roadmap that positions Papua New Guinea to take ownership and leadership of its future.

Mr Chairman,

As stated population management, gender empowerment and strengthening the family unit are integral to this paradigm shift and responsible development model.

Papua New Guinea has a detailed and comprehensive 10 year National Population Policy which ended in 2010. This population policy was drawn from the Papua New Guinea Constitution and ICPD Programme of Action. The GoPNG conducted a mid-term review of its implementation in 2006 (mid-year of the 2000-2010) as well as the end of policy review with assistance from UNFPA in 2012. Findings

from these reviews are also been reflected in the drafting of the revised National Population Policy.

The new Population Policy is being formulated and will incorporate the findings and recommendations of these reviews as well as the principles of responsible sustainable development. At the heart of the revised National Population Policy and the 10 year National Health Plan is the need to stabilize the population growth and reduce the maternal death rates from 733 deaths per 100,000 live births to a target of 100 deaths by 2030 as per our long term plan.

Additionally, we are also committed to reducing the fertility rate from 4.3 to 3 children per women and to stabilize the population growth rate which currently sits at 2.7 percent. We remain steadfastly committed to ensure that these translate to improved lives and livelihoods for our citizens.

In support of this, my government has allocated a record funding of 40% of its total budget to health and education respectively at national and sub-national levels. The O'Neill-Dion Government is funding tuition fee-free education for all school-age children from elementary to secondary schools as well as free and subsidized primary healthcare for its citizens.

Mr Chairman,

Papua New Guinea also recognizes the vital importance of social safety net for our people as the traditional system of familial care as a safety net is increasingly under severe stress and eroding. This is due to external influences impacting adversely on individuals and families. My Government is therefore formulating a Social Protection Policy to provide support for the most vulnerable and

marginalised segments of society, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and children at risk. We will commence a pension scheme for the elderly and the disabled in 2016.

Mr Chairman,

I am pleased to inform this meeting that my Government has committed record funding of nearly USD10 million (K25million) this year for sustainable development initiatives including partnering with the United Nations to make available forty thousand contraceptive implants as an important intervention measure for the health of our women and girls of child bearing age. This will be scaled up to USD20 million (K50 million) by 2015. The Government in partnership with our Development Partners is also investing in mid-wifery and referral systems to address complicated pregnancies.

Furthermore, the Government is also developing a National Statistics Development Strategy to provide a Roadmap for Papua New Guinea to continually improve and update its statistical information collection and management for improved decision making. This includes embarking on a national biometric identification card system this year to record and maintain population information of our citizens.

As the global community enters the final phase of the MDGs implementation, Papua New Guinea as a State Party to the MDGs, remains committed to it. We have retailored the global targets and indicators and integrated them into our national long-term and medium-term development plans. The new National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development further catalyses our MDGs

implementation and provides a pathway to achieving our re-tailored MDG targets and indicators.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, we acknowledge and commend the work of the Commission and pledge our continued support to the ICPD's Program of Action and that it be given serious consideration for inclusion in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

I thank you.