



United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY

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For Delivery at the

**“Forty-Seventh 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 Program of Action of the
International Conference on Population and Development**

**April 7-12, 2014
New York**

Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates

The Economic Commission for Africa welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development and commends the Chair and the Bureau for the excellent organization of the main and side events.

Chairperson, since the historic 1994 Cairo Conference, Africa has consistently undertaken 5-year regional reviews of the Program of Action, and regional conferences at ministerial level.

In October 2003, all 54 member States, including for the first time, the Republic of Southern Sudan, attended the Regional Population and Development Conference and adopted a consensus statement under the theme of '*Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: the Future we want for Africa.*' The statement underlined respect for and promotion of human rights, women's and youth empowerment, and sustainability as important pillars for addressing population and development issues and concerns in Africa.

It emphasized the right to development, the right to justice and equality, building the capacity of states and individuals, and partnering with civil society organizations, for achieving population and development objectives.

Chairperson

Our policies and strategies for addressing population and development issues and concerns have been greatly shaped and influenced by a changing world and a rapidly transforming Africa. The world is changing into a new phase of globalization and accelerated economic integration, accompanied by global liberalization of trade and financial markets. These developments have led to higher value addition from knowledge generation and impelled the emergence of global industrial value chains. Several countries in the global South, such as China, India, Brazil and the Republic of South Africa, have become key players in global development due to the size of their economies, and the size of their population and markets. These are the countries with which Africa is rapidly building trade and investment relations.

Africa is experiencing significant changes and development transformations that will impact on its future population and development prospects. The continent is perceived as the next growth pole in the world, because of its unique geographical and historical strengths, and of its wealth of natural resources and minerals, which will lead to an economic giant in a globalized world. Several African countries are among the fastest growing economies in the world. The scale of economies expanded in many countries, particularly in South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, and Algeria, which are also the most populated countries in the continent.

This high growth is attributed to factors such as the continent's youthful population; the burgeoning middle class; improvements in governance and macroeconomic fundamentals; the growing strength of the private sector; and the massive urbanization process with its ensuing benefits of agglomeration. There has also been a great improvement in governance on the continent, with a very discernible trend towards constitutional government under the auspices of the African Union, while the institutional landscape also continues to improve.

Chairperson

While these developments have led to more positive assessments of Africa, there are legitimate concerns about inclusive growth, the promotion and protection of human rights, and broad social protection programs, particularly for poorer people and other vulnerable groups, including women and children, as well as capacity and institutional gaps, including reliable, timely and consistent data for planning and implementation. Many of these problems manifest in high unemployment rates, persistent poverty, high malnutrition among women and children, high maternal mortality, low life expectancy at birth, inadequate respect and protection of the rights of women, girls and ethnic minorities, weak institutions and poor implementation capacities. Africa has to grow with equity, and must manage its population and demographic changes in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

As is well known and has been elaborated upon at the sessions, Africa is currently the main driver of population growth in a world that is rapidly ageing, and by 2100, one third of the world's population will be living in Africa. Undoubtedly, this mega trend will greatly influence full implementation of the population and development agenda beyond 2014 in the continent, and the main challenge is to unlock the resource potentials through appropriate macroeconomic and social policies that will lead to sustained high economic growth and inclusive social development for the continent's people:

- First. **Make use of the extraordinary wealth of the continent for well planned inclusive development**, to respond to the economic and social needs of the next generations

- Second. **Invest in developing high quality education, health, social protection, and data systems, to achieve inclusive and equitable social development.** Investment in these areas will expand development opportunities and benefits to greater proportions of the population and improve the basis for planning and implementation.

- Third. **Create jobs and employment opportunities, so as to make maximum use of the rapidly growing work force.** This must include training and development of skills, and access to a

range of productive resources for both the youth and ageing work force.

Fourth. **Integrate clear and measureable policies and strategies for gender equity in economic and social development.** We have to unlock the potential and extraordinary creativity of African women and youth

Chairperson,

Africa should tell its own population and development story, based on its cultural realities and on the aspirations of its people. Therefore, our population policies and development policies must put **Africa's people First**. The ECA has repositioned its strategic programs and structures to contribute to empowering Africa, consistent with its response to changing dynamics that would impact on the implementation of its mandate. Putting **Africa First** also means continued close collaboration among the three pan-African institutions, namely the African Union (AU), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the ECA, to ensure coherence and synergy in programme delivery, as we respond to the needs of our member states.

I thank you for your attention.