



**Statement on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries by His Excellency Mr. Zahid Maleque, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the Fiftieth Session of the Commission on Population and Development (New York, 3 April 2017)**

**Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries. We align ourselves with the statement made by Ecuador on behalf of G77.
2. We warmly congratulate you for your election as the Chair of the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development and also the members of the Bureau. We also express our deep appreciation for the reports submitted by the Secretary-General, which are very pertinent for our discussion on "Changing Population Age Structures and Sustainable Development".

Madam Chair,

3. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development emphasizes that investments in human capital promote sustainable development. The Istanbul Programme of Actions for the LDCs articulates that a demographic dividend must be achieved for sustainable development. In the past twenty years, the LDCs could have considerable progress in ensuring better health, education, and job opportunities for their people. However, numerous challenges continue to persist in these countries. While significant gains could be achieved in primary education, life expectancy, reducing maternal mortality and child health in the LDCs, inclusive and equitable human and social development including skill development of the youth, gender equality and empowerment of women are yet to be materialized to the fullest extent. In addition, we are being faced with new and emerging factors such as climate change impacts, rapid urbanization, human mobility and migration, conflicts and refugee crisis and so on.
4. In this back drop, the principles, goals and objectives set out in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development converge with those of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs. We must recognize that the full implementation of these Programmes of Action are crucial for the achievement of 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the LDCs who constitute the most vulnerable section of the humanity.
5. Despite some progress, continued high fertility rate in LDCs, coupled with the decline in mortality, has resulted in rapid population growth in the LDCs, along with age structures that are the most youthful in the world. The population is projected to double in size from 954 million persons in 2015 to 1.9 billion in 2050, and increase to 3.2 billion persons by 2100. Young people are projected to constitute 25 to 30 per cent of the population in the LDCs in 2060. As far as education is concerned, millions of girls and boys across the LDCs are going to school for just a few years or less. There is a lack of widespread, quality education through secondary school in LDCs, including lack of resources, insufficient physical infrastructure, trained teachers and much more. While the gender gap has narrowed significantly for primary school, girls face an entirely different set of barriers that often get little attention, especially as they move into adolescence: barriers linked to their empowerment and their right to sexual and reproductive health. These facts make the challenges faced by young and adolescent people absolutely central to the policies and political agendas needed to fulfill the internationally agreed development agendas.

Madam Chair,

6. The LDCs urgently need a fundamental reform in their education systems, such that the coming generation of young people in those countries could contribute to modernizing the economies of their own countries. We need major upscaling of national investments in this sector for the urgent expansion of the highest quality education at secondary and tertiary levels, including technical and specialized education and higher training opportunities, featuring a modern curriculum that prepares young people for a globalized, IT-linked and innovative 21st century economy.
7. Over the last 20 years, the proportion of women in LDCs employed outside the home has increased only slightly except in few countries such as Bangladesh, Lesotho and Eritrea. We recognize that women empowerment is inextricably interlinked with their access to good education, their participation in the formal labor force and materializing their sexual and reproductive health as a human right. They must have universal access to health care, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services. These are essential for them to realize their capabilities.
8. Young people in low-income countries face critical challenges. Three out of four young workers in these countries engage in either vulnerable, casual or temporary employment. Hence, decent work is a central aspiration for individuals and societies and we must translate the SDG Target 8.6 which is “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” into a reality.
9. About 30 percent of older persons participate in the labor market in lower-middle income countries. The numbers are vastly higher for most LDCs. Working life begins incredibly early for most people in LDCs; for many it never ends. We must take these facts into account when we embark on sustainable development in the context of the changing population age structures.
10. There must be enhanced investments to ensure that every adolescent and youth, especially every girl and woman, can go through life’s critical transitions – from school to decent work to family formation and child bearing to lifelong learning and old age – without meeting barriers of limited schooling, child marriage and early childbearing, maternal death, gender inequality and discrimination.
11. We need to strengthen national population data ecosystems and implementation of innovative approaches for the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of demographic data with the aim of assuring that all least developed countries have the capacity to integrate population projections into development planning, disaggregate population data to identify and locate the vulnerable, and target national policies to redress inequalities and meet the changing needs of the population. LDCs have a particular need in this regard, given lack of core sources of population data and longstanding weaknesses in their data ecosystems. SDG Target 17.18 also sets an urgent and essential objective for strengthening statistical capacity, with specific reference to LDCs.
12. While all the LDCs are making sincere efforts to implement the Programme of Action of ICPD, they require concrete and strengthened international cooperation for achieving demographic dividends. The 2030 Agenda gives us a clear guidance to establish such framework of cooperation and international community must demonstrate its will to make it effective.

Thank you.