



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

50TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION
AND DEVELOPMENT

AGENDA ITEM 3:

***“CHANGING POPULATION AGE STRUCTURES
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”.***

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Madam Chair,

At the outset, let me express warmest congratulations to you and the other members of the Bureau on your election at this 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), and to assure you of our support in steering this session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished delegates of Ecuador on behalf of G-77 and China, Cameroon on behalf of the African Group and Bangladesh on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

I thank the Secretary-General for the informative reports submitted to guide our deliberations.

Madam Chair,

The world's population is undergoing significant changes in its age distribution, from the mostly young age structures of the past, towards larger proportions of middle-aged and older persons in the present and future decades. Such changes, which are influenced by various social and economic factors, have important consequences for sustainable development. This is why the theme: *“Changing population age structures and sustainable development”* is both timely and apt;

In Sierra Leone, drawing from the lessons learnt from the implementation of the MDGs, we have taken action to quickly integrate the SDGs into our national development planning processes by linking each of the 17 goals and 169 targets to our national development programme-the Agenda for Prosperity (A4P).

Madam Chair,

Sierra Leone is at the first stage of the demographic transition, with 80 percent (or 5.7 million) of the population below 35 years, and only 4 percent are 65 years and above. This clearly depicts a bulge in the country's youthful population, with an in-built momentum for growth at 3.2 percent as projected by our 2015 Population and Housing and Census.

Government fully recognizes that this demographic boom continues to pose challenges for jobs and delivery of social services. Government is, however, aware that with appropriate investments in health, including family planning, education, conducive economic policies, job creation for youth and good governance, the country can achieve the demographic dividend that will create the window of opportunity for moving the country on the path to middle-income status by 2035.

With regards to **gender equality and women's empowerment**, major policies and legislations are now in place to empower women, improve their situation, while ensuring that the physically challenged and aged are not marginalized. These issues are enshrined as a key pillar of our national development framework, the Agenda for Prosperity (A4P). Government continues to make progress in terms of representation and participation of women in key political decision making positions.

The overall female participation in the labour market stands at 65.7 percent as compared to 68.7 percent for men.

Madam Chair,

With regards to challenges of high maternal mortality in Sierra Leone coupled with high teenage pregnancy and other reproductive health complications, the Government has made some progress with the use of modern family planning methods among married women and teenage girls doubling from 7 percent to 16 percent. Moreover, delivery at health facilities has doubled from 25 percent to 56 percent; Antenatal care by skilled birth attendants has increased from 87 percent to 97 percent and delivery by skilled birth providers has increased from 42 percent to 61 percent.

These achievements have been made possible through nationally-driven programmes such as the Free Health Care Initiative, the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy; and the Adolescent Girls Initiative for improved access to education. Government is therefore committed to substantially increasing its financing to the health sector and developing new financing mechanisms, including a Social Health Insurance Scheme. Efforts to improve human resources for health have led to the implementation of the Performance-Based Initiative to compensate health workers delivering women's health services across the health sector.

Madam Chair,

Mindful that population ageing is a major global demographic trend that brings both opportunities and challenges, the Government is in the process of finalising a National Ageing Policy. This will ensure that the rights and needs of all those aged 60 years and above are recognised and upheld. Significant progress has also been made in areas of disability with the establishment of a National

Social Safety Net and Pension's Scheme, and a National Disability Commission to champion and coordinate the support to this vulnerable group.

In conclusion **Madam Chair**, let me assure you that Sierra Leone has a strong political will for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the determination to *'leave no one behind'* in our development strides. This further reaffirms our dedication to the enduring principles of the ICPD Programme of Action, especially in the context of the SDGs. We underscore the importance of partnerships and continued international cooperation in the implementation of the Programme of Action, as well as the importance of delivering environmentally sustainable development.

I thank you for your attention.