



Check against Delivery

**United Nations Commission on  
Population and Development**

***Fertility, Reproductive Health and Development***

**Statement**

**by**

**Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin  
Executive Director  
United Nations Population Fund**

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Mister Chairman,

Members of the Commission,

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

If you were born before 1967, you've seen world population double.

As our population approaches 7 billion, every person particularly adolescents and young people should be able to enjoy human rights and human dignity. Every person should have the opportunity to make the most of his or her potential.

These universal principles underpin the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

The choices freely made and the opportunities enjoyed by individuals bring about social and demographic changes which ultimately affect development.

The right to sexual and reproductive health is essential to women's empowerment, gender equality, and sustainable development.

It is my pleasure to address the United Nations Commission on Population and Development for the first time as the Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Commission on Population and Development, Ambassador Brian Bowler of Malawi; the Under-Secretary of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Sha Zukang, and the Director of the Population Division, Hania Zlotnik.

UNFPA looks forward to strengthened collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Population Division.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, countries have registered substantial progress. Gains have been made in advancing reproductive health and rights, and promoting women's empowerment.

Millions of lives have been saved through reproductive health services particularly in the high and middle income countries. Indeed in a good number of these countries today there are challenges of ageing which require the urgent attention of the international community.

Today the least developed countries face high rates of mortality, fertility and population growth that threaten their prospects for development. Investing in reproductive health will allow the LDCs to meet the needs of women and couples who currently lack access to family planning, and reduce poverty.

UNFPA as a global leader will work with member states to address their specific reproductive health issues.

In countries in all regions, laws and policies are now in place to protect reproductive rights and the rights of women. However, achieving universal access to reproductive health and realizing reproductive rights remain an urgent challenge.

As I speak, too many people continue to face discrimination, coercion and violence in making decisions about reproduction. Too many women and couples cannot exercise their right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children.

Some 215 million women in developing countries, who want to plan and space their births, do not have access to modern contraception. Each year, neglect of sexual and reproductive health results in an estimated:

- 80 million unintended pregnancies;
- 22 million unsafe abortions;
- 358,000 deaths from maternal causes, including 47,000 deaths from unsafe abortion.

My friends,

We can no longer afford to shy away from these realities.

Just as no woman or girl should die during pregnancy and childbirth, no woman or girl should die from unsafe abortion.

The best way to reduce recourse to abortion is to provide comprehensive sexuality education and family planning. Family planning as part of comprehensive reproductive health services saves lives, slows population growth, enhances women's life options, and reduces poverty.

During the past decade, progress has stalled in most parts of the world in reducing adolescent birth rates and meeting unmet need for family planning.

Those being left behind include adolescent girls, women in rural areas, those with little education, and those from the poorest households.

As we move forward, there is an urgent need to focus on human rights, equity and reaching those who are vulnerable.

Mr. Chairman,

As the new Executive Director of UNFPA, I am particularly concerned about the vulnerability of young people. They are growing up in a fast-changing world.

There are an estimated 1.8 billion young people who are 10 to 24 years-old. They constitute more than a quarter of the world's population. Just below 90 per cent live in developing countries.

In the middle income countries UNFPA will work to address the issues of urbanisation and migration as they affect young people.

In the least developed countries, 60 percent of people are below the age of 25, the parents of the next generation.

Under my leadership, UNFPA will give young people the attention they deserve.

We will listen to and support the participation of young people. We will push for greater investments in young people, especially adolescent girls.

We will advocate greater investment in education, including age-appropriate sexuality education, and also reproductive health.

We will advocate employment and social participation. Indeed as the world seeks to establish a global green economy young people must be positioned to be entrepreneurs and the leaders of innovation.

We will provide support to countries for a comprehensive package of reproductive health including family planning services, integrated into the primary healthcare system.

Mr. Chairman,

Investing in young people, reproductive health and gender equality can speed up countries' economic growth and improve their prospects for sustainable development.

This is the message that I will carry forward:

- Next month in Istanbul during the Fourth United Nations Conference of the Least Developed Countries;
- In June in New York at the high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS in the General Assembly,
- In July in New York at the International Youth Conference, and
- In the lead-up to next year's Rio+20 meeting on sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The ICPD Programme of Action and the +5 Key Actions guide our work at UNFPA and all of our work here in the UN Commission on Population and Development.

We are now preparing for follow-up to the ICPD beyond 2014, in line with General Assembly resolution (A/RES/65/234), that was adopted in December.

This will involve processes at the national, regional and global levels. This will feed into an operational review of the implementation of the Programme of Action to be conducted by UNFPA.

For this review, UNFPA will draw from the expertise from a wide range of partners. This includes all relevant parts of the United Nations system, especially the Department for Economic and Social Affairs and its Population and Statistics Divisions.

We will also work closely with the UN regional commissions, and with civil society at all levels, particularly at the country level, so that we can capture the voices from the ground where it matters most.

Mr. Chairman,

As we look to the future, one thing is clear: To fully implement the ICPD Programme of Action, there is a need for increased financial resources.

According to estimates in the Secretary-General's report, total funding falls \$24 billion short of what is required to achieve the ICPD objectives.

Today I call for increased political will, renewed commitment, and urgent action to carry the ICPD agenda forward and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Investing in the health and rights of women and young people is not an expenditure. It is an investment in our future.

It is important that Member States commit to providing sustained predictable financing for the integrated services which deliver sexual and reproductive health.

We need to keep pushing to make the right to sexual and reproductive health a priority.

We need to keep pushing to make universal access to reproductive health a reality.

In a world of seven billion people, and counting, we all have to count on each other.

I thank you.