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STATEMENT

BY

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**AT THE 56TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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**Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I congratulate the Chairperson and other Bureau Members of the Commission for organizing the **56th Session of the Commission on Population and Development**. This year's theme; ***"Population, Education and Sustainable Development,"*** is timely as we address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which kept millions of children out of school.

Excellencies,

Uganda remains committed through the full implementation of its third National Development Plan to improve the quality of life of her people by addressing population issues, sustainable development, and widening access to education, health, and socio-economic opportunities and strengthen social protection to achieve prosperity for all. In this regard, Uganda has continued to implement targeted interventions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the ICPD Programme of Action goals and objectives, the Africa Agenda 2063, Uganda Vision 2040, and other regional and global frameworks.

Excellencies,

We welcome this year's theme because among others education is one of the essential underpinnings of human development and socio-economic transformation. As we address various population concerns, the Government of Uganda has put in place various policies and programs to improve access and quality of education that include inter alia:

- Introduction of the Universal Primary Education program in 1997, to make basic education accessible to all children, and in 2007 we introduced the Universal Secondary Education policy to increase access to secondary education. These programs have greatly improved school enrolment. At the primary level, enrollment has increased from 70.6 percent in 1996 to 102.7 percent in 2017;
- Commencement of the Students' Loan Scheme in 2014 for higher education to ensure that all Ugandans have equal opportunities to attain university education. Besides, we are still implementing the 1991 Affirmative Action Policy to enable more girls to acquire university education;
- In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Sports rolled out a new competence-based lower secondary school curriculum. The new curriculum aims to improve the quality of education and enhance the achievement levels of students in literacy, numeracy, and life skills. In addition, over time, we have increased the education budget as a percentage of the total budget from 1.37% in FY 2017/18 to 11.49% in FY 2020/21. Consequently, Uganda's literacy rate has increased from 54% in 1990 to 72% in 2016;
- Promotion of access to sexual reproductive health, through policy regulatory framework and increment to resource allocations to reproductive health.

Excellencies, despite this progress, several challenges persist;

- We still grapple with a high school dropout rate, with only 38% of the pupils who enroll for primary one completing primary seven. Besides, despite efforts to protect children, child marriages and teenage pregnancies are still big problems in Uganda. Forty percent of the girls are married off before their

18th birthday, and the teenage pregnancy rate is still very high at 25 percent.

Excellencies, in response to the challenges mentioned above and the need to fast-track the attainment of the SDG targets;

- Government has developed guidelines for reintegrating teenage mothers into school and provide non-formal learning opportunities to those who drop out of school, to equip them with employable skills and competencies needed by the labor market.
- In addition, Government has intensified efforts to alleviate household poverty through community mobilization, mindset change, and the implementation of the Parish Development Model. This is aimed at among others empowering parents to fulfill their children's basic needs and address the economic reasons for marrying off young girls.

Chairperson, Excellencies, and distinguished delegates, Uganda reiterates its commitment to accelerate actions to ensure the full implementation of the ICPD and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore call upon the international community to scale up their support to Uganda in this regard.

Thank you.