



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

STATEMENT

BY

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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

AT THE

FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Madam Chair
Excellencies
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

1. The delegation of Sierra Leone is pleased to be part of this debate marking the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development on the theme “**Population, education, and Sustainable Development**” at a point in history when the Global Community is striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals amidst current global challenges.
2. As we would recall, the first International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which was held in Cairo, Egypt was followed by the adoption of a Programme of Action which recognized that Reproductive Health, Women's Empowerment, and Gender Equality are pathways to Sustainable Development.
3. In the ensuing years, the world has seen a remarkable transformation in the population demographics and development needs of people in terms of age, gender, culture, and the environment, leading to uneven progress in meeting targets outlined in the ICPD Programme of Action.

Madam Chair,

4. One of the priority goals of Sierra Leone is to achieve Gender Equality and Empowerment of all Women, including women's full enjoyment of their Human Rights

in all aspects. Empowering women and giving them the opportunity to make their own choices and actively participate in the economy makes a huge difference on many fronts. We believe that promoting Gender Equality can contribute to driving inclusive growth and reducing poverty. To achieve this, the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone has recently enacted the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE) and significant investment into accelerator goal 4 (on Education) is being pursued. This Act will ensure an increase in women's participation in political and civil spaces, women's access to finance and employment opportunity, equal pay and also establishes a 30% quota for women in elective and appointive positions. The Government has adopted many strategies and laws to combat SGBV as demonstrated in the revised Sexual Offences Act and the First Lady's Hands Off Our Girls campaign.

5. Sierra Leone remains fully committed to delivering on the visionary agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment as outlined in the Beijing Declaration because we believe Women and Girls are entitled to live in dignity and freedom.
6. Sierra Leone has a young population with 48 % of its people below the age of 18 and the country still faces several challenges, coupled with the ongoing global crisis, but with strategic interventions from the government and with support from development

partners, there is an enhanced operational and fiscal space that better integrates response measures to cushion the effect of both internal and external shocks.

7. Additionally, to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with Development Partners initiated strategies for better integrated COVID-19 recovery measures into development programming to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus and forestall the effects of the pandemic more effectively and efficiently while simultaneously driving sustainable development for Children, Girls, Women and all Age Groups.
8. The enabling environment for the progressive realization of child rights in Sierra Leone was strengthened by the Government's political will to address related issues and this was demonstrated in 2021 with the passage of a Breastmilk Substitutes (BMS) Act. As part of the COVID-19 recovery effort, in ensuring safe interaction among pupils and students; COVID-19 vaccines became available in March 2021 and vaccination started immediately. **About 37.9%** of the country's population has been fully vaccinated.

Mr./Madam Chair,

9. The Government of Sierra Leone's Free Quality Education Programme (FQSE) has helped increase

national enrolment by 36% and learning outcomes have also improved greatly with gender parity achieved at primary and junior secondary school levels. The Government has introduced a lot of policies such as the Radical Inclusion Policy, the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) Policy, the Comprehensive Safety and School feeding policies and several other national strategies. These policies have contributed to the reform in the education sector which has accelerated the improvement in teaching and learning. Part of the reform has been in the introduction of new curricula which now makes provision for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Climate Education and Civic Education in the syllabi all driven by a focus on critical thinking and computational skills. All these initiatives have put Sierra Leone at the center of the Global Transforming Education Agenda.

- 10.** The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to pursuing its accelerator goals 4 (Education) and 16 (peace, Justice, and strong institutions) as catalytic priorities to achieve the SDGs. Sierra Leone is of the view that quality education is a human right and therefore should be accessible to all.
- 11.** In conclusion, the delegation of Sierra Leone would like to emphasize that in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building a prosperous and healthy population there is a need to invest in

statistical data collection that will focus on disaggregating the population by income, gender, race, ethnicity, geographic location age and other characteristics relevant for policy formulation and to identify gaps in implementing the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

I THANK YOU.