



Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

**FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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**Mr. Chairman,
Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Gambia aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Statement delivered by Nigeria on behalf of the Africa Group.

At the onset, I would like to congratulate you Mr. Chairman, on your appointment as Chair of the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development. As we commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), The Gambia fully supports the Political Declaration adopted during the opening session and we take this opportunity to assure you and the Bureau of The Gambia's full support throughout this session.

It is indeed an honour and great pleasure to share with this distinguished body the experience of The Gambia in observing the recommendations of the review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the ICPD and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Gambia once again reaffirms its commitments to the Principles, Charters and Protocols that advance the agenda of population and development, particularly the provision of sexual and reproductive health and enhancing the decision-making powers of women and youth at all levels. We believe that ICPD principles and aspirations are still alive and continue to enjoy The Government of The Gambia's full support.

In this regard, the Government of The Gambia continues to promote the principles of universal access to reproductive health-care services including HIV/Aids and the right of women to decide freely and responsibly the timing

and number of children they wish to have. We have indeed recognized that universal access to reproductive health-care and services such as family planning, information and education, including HIV/AIDS, are a prerequisite for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda.

In addition, The Gambia in its various development policies and programmes upholds the right of adolescents and youth to access information and services related to sexual and reproductive health. This includes education on harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). We have therefore taken steps to integrate women, adolescence and youth Reproductive Health issues in the National Development Plan and the Reproductive Maternal New-born Child and Adolescent Health Policy.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of The Gambia continues to demonstrate high political will in providing quality and affordable health services to all Gambians and most importantly the provision of free maternal and child health services in public health facilities. Furthermore, malaria prevention and management during pregnancy, which is an integral element of reproductive health services in The Gambia, is a source of envy in the sub-region. The same is true for access to health service delivery points, as over 85% of the population is within 5 kilometres of a primary health care post.

The Gambia has registered considerable gains in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Notable among the key achievements are: the impressive improvement in girls' education, women's empowerment and economic development, and Government's support to national population and housing censuses and surveys such as the Demographic and Health Survey, MICS etc, and reduction in poverty across all levels. We have also registered great results in the acceleration of efforts to eliminate harmful traditional

practices such as FGM and Child Marriage, following the criminalization of the two practices in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Women in The Gambia actively take part in all human endeavours, from the household, to the farms, to **occupying top decision-making positions, which have significantly contributed** to their meaningful participation and agency to engage in public life. This has also yielded results in boosting women's access to productive resources, economic opportunities and institutional support services.

The Government of The Gambia continues to recognize the importance of south-south cooperation in population and development, which has great potentials for the smooth transfer of technology, skills and the sharing of best practices and lessons learnt in the area of reproductive health, population and development with other **PPD** member countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The Gambia Government has invested significantly over the years in human, material and financial resources to address population, health and development issues. This has yielded positive results. For example, Total Fertility Rate has declined from 6.01% to 5.6% from 1993 to 2013; maternal mortality ratio has declined from 1050 to 730 and 433 per 100,000 live births between 1990 and 2013 respectively; equally, the under-five and infant mortality rates have declined from 135 to 54 and from 99 to 34 per 1000 live births respectively between 1990 and 2013.

Mr. Chairman,

While counting successes in implementing the recommendations of the review, we continue to face a number of challenges which include resource inadequacies and the youthfulness of the population.

The Gambia still remains one of the most densely populated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (a population density estimated at 127 persons per square kilometres). It is worth noting that the high population density may pose challenges both in terms of environmental sustainability and agricultural production. There is also a high unmet need for Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC) services (of 79%), which poses serious complications to mothers and newborns.

Mr Chairman,

To effectively plan and manage development, we need population data. The availability of data and information to policymakers, civil society, academia and individuals can help us bridge the implementation gap, enhance our capacity to monitor policies and improve transparency and accountability.

Mr. Chairman,

It is worth noting that unless the international community and Governments fulfil their funding commitments towards addressing population and development issues, including through ODA, the developing countries in particular will continue to find it difficult to tackle challenges posed by our populations especially the youthful generation.

Despite all the challenges outlined above, the Government of The Gambia is still committed to managing the population resource in order to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development and ultimately improve the quality of life of all Gambians.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.