



Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

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REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT THE

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AND DEVELOPMENT

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**Mr. Chairman,
Members of the Commission,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
All other protocols respectfully observed.**

It is indeed an honour and great pleasure for me and my delegation to be given this opportunity to share with the distinguished delegates the experience of the Gambia in the implementation of the ICPD programme of action.

My delegation wishes to extend its heartfelt congratulations for your election as the chair of this august gathering. We wish you and your bureau very successful deliberations.

We are indeed delighted to be associated with this noble endeavour that seeks to improve the wellbeing of our people. In this respect, the Gambia reaffirms its commitments to the implementation of the programme of action of the International Conference on population and development and the further implementation of the commitment of the ICPD + 5.

Following the Cairo conference the Gambia took steps to integrate the recommendation of the ICPD programme of action

into existing policies. In this respect, the National Population Policy was revised and also took cognisance of the Kilimanjaro Plan of Action (1984), the Ouagadougou Plan of Action (1997), the Dakar/Ngor Declarations on Population and Sustainable Development (1992), Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (2006).

Mr. Chairman,

In view of the principles and ideals contained in the above, my Government has invested over the years in human, materials and financial resources in addressing population and development issues which have yielded results. For example, the 2003 Population and Housing Census has shown a decline in population growth rate from 4.2% to 2.8% during the period 1993 to 2003 with a doubling time of 23 years. However, other demographic indicators e.g. maternal mortality ratio, infant and child mortality, under-5 mortality TFR etc are believed to have declined over the years but lack of up-to-date and reliable data makes it difficult to prove this.

To this end, efforts are well underway to conduct a demographic and health survey in order to address the data paucity for these critical indicators in the ICPD programme of action.

The government of the Gambia strongly believes in the principles of universal access to reproductive health and services including HIV/Aids, and believes that couples and individuals have a right to decide freely the number, spacing and timing of their children and should be given the means to do so through information, education and communication. The government of the Gambia continues to demonstrate high political will in providing health services to all Gambians at affordable prices and the icing on the cake is the provision of free maternal care to all Gambian.

Furthermore, the government of the Gambia recognises gender equity, equality and empowerment of women as critical in ensuring universal access to reproductive health and rights, decision making for women and a means to sustainable development.

To this end, women continue to occupy key positions since the onset of the Second Republic and the government has since formulated and adopted a gender and women empowerment policy, domesticated and implemented various frameworks including CEDAW which have positively impacted on the lives of Gambian women.

Mr. Chairman

In the implementation of the ICPD programme of action we continue to face a number of challenges which include socio-cultural believes/practices resource inadequacies and the youthfulness of the population. Over 45% of the Gambian population is below the age of 15 years. This youthful age structure means a high potential for rapid population growth in the future as well as a high dependency burden.

The Gambia made significant progress over the past three decades at improving the health, nutrition and sanitary conditions of the population resulting to increases in average life expectancy to 60 years for both sexes. Only 4% of the Gambia's population is above the age of 65 years.

However, the aged in all societies have special needs that have to be addressed especially in view of the changing role of the family and the weakening of the extended family system which supported the aged in traditional societies.

Even though the Gambia's HIV prevalence rate is relatively lower every efforts is being made to provide youth friendly information and services to our young people.

Mr. Chairman

It is worth noting that unless the international community and governments fulfil their funding commitments in the implementation of the ICPD POA, the developing countries in particular will find it difficult to attain the goals of this very important programme of action.

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 Gambians.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.