



MALAWI

**STATEMENT DELIVERED AT THE
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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**Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Since I am speaking for the first time, permit me, on behalf of the Malawi delegation to congratulate you first of all for you and your bureau being elected as Chair and Bureau members of the 44th session of the Commission on Population and Development; secondly I wish to commend the excellent manner in which you are conducting the session.

My delegation takes note of the statements made by the Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang. At the same time, we welcome the new Executive Director of the UNFPA and wish to echo what other delegations have said and also pledge to work with him in order to fulfill his mandate during his tenure.

Chairperson

Malawi takes population issues very seriously and wishes to throw some light on demographic trends in our country in the past decade. Malawi's population is very young with the median age of 17. The fertility rate is declining but at a

slower rate than the global trend. Currently the rate stands at 5.7 against 2.5; but the national decline is from 6.3 in 2000. The population growth rate stands at 2.8 percent and it is expected to double by 2023.

Currently the country's Population Policy that was introduced in 1994 and is currently under review, does not specify on the number of children for every woman, and it is the view of my Government that prescription may not be the best option for us. In a bid to reduce the population growth rate however, the country is focusing on enhanced advocacy and awareness, increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services, improving quality and access to family planning services provision, girl child education, early child development, and making sure that every one's rights to reproductive health are met.

Malawi is also focusing on meeting key health related MDGs with the view to providing a conducive environment to reduce high fertility, maternal and child mortality rates.

Chairperson

As a country, while acknowledging the need and benefits of lower fertility levels, Malawi strongly feels that it cannot adopt the 2.5 children per woman as a policy since it will

have implications on our productivity and development in the later stages. As you might be aware, the HIV and AIDS pandemic is concentrated mostly among the reproductive segment of the population and the mortality rates are high. My Government feels that restricting the number of children per woman, will therefore imply:

- Reaching the country's below-replacement-fertility rate quickly;
- Reduced production in the agriculture sector since our economy, in the medium term, is agricultural-based;
- Reduction in the labor force; and
- Increased number of the elderly.

However, let me emphasize that Malawi will continue to advocate for smaller family sizes through Information, Education and Communication (IEC), and ensure that people make informed decisions on the number of children they would wish to have.

Chairperson

The laws of Malawi categorize abortion as illegal. Additionally, the average woman in Malawi is more concerned with having a healthy pregnancy, healthy children and adequate nutritious food to feed her family. Furthermore, the percentages of abortions are low and mostly among the youth. Complications of abortions

contribute 5% to the current maternal mortality rates in Malawi.

We wish to reiterate that Malawi's focus is on implementing the ICPD agenda and making sure that every one has access to reproductive health, and equal participation in the development processes of the country.

We look forward to the dialogue availed to my delegation through this session and I thank you very much for your attention.

Zikomo!