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STATEMENT BY

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WOMEN'S AFFAIRS
OF

THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

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Madam Chair

First of all, I would like to congratulate you and the rest of the bureau on your election as chair to this important meeting. Let me also mention that the Gambia aligns itself with South Africa and Niger's statements on behalf of the African Group. However, the Gambia wishes to add its voice and share some of our experiences in the integration of population issues in sustainable development including the post 2015 development agenda.

Madam Chair, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

The Gambia's journey towards integrating population issues in sustainable development including the post 2015 development agenda began way back in a 1979 cabinet paper entitled "framework for the development of a population policy" a move that gave birth to the first National Population Policy in 1992, which was revised in 1996 and 2006 respectively.

Chairperson,

The Gambia government under the dynamic and distinguished leadership of His Excellency, the President, Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya AJJ Jammeh has placed population issues high on its development agenda in a number of policy development and pronouncements. Key among these were the development of a Reproductive Health Policy and the introduction of free maternal care for pregnant mothers in all government health facilities, together with other health interventions contributed to the reduction of maternal mortality from 980 per 100,000 in 2001 to 433 per 100,000 in 2013. In addition, the Gambia has also witnessed a sharp decline in not only Infant Mortality but Child mortality as well. Infant mortality has declined from 75 deaths per 1,000 births in 2003 to 34 deaths per 1,000 in 2013. Child mortality has also fallen from 99 deaths per 1,000 in 2003 to 54 deaths per 1,000 births in 2013. Similarly, skilled attendants at birth and percentage delivery at health facilities have all increased significantly in the Gambia.

Madam Chair,

Over the years, the Gambia has demonstrated its commitment, to all charters, and protocols that advance the agenda of providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, for all young people and meaningfully engaging them at all levels of decision-making. Institutions such as the National Youth Council, the National Enterprise Development Initiative, the National Youth Service Scheme coordinated by the National Youth Policy and its Action Plan have been established. With these institutions, the Gambia is harnessing the demographic dividend to ensure not only the employability and productivity of the youth folk but also exposing them to adequate Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) issues and services in a youth friendly environment.

Madam Chair,

Regarding girls' education and women empowerment for productivity, the Gambia through the ministries of Basic and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology ensure the enrolment and retention of girls in schools which has the ability to control early marriage and fertility. For example, Gross enrolment rate for girls at the lower basic and upper basic school stands at 98 % and 60% respectively, while completion rate at the same levels of education stands at 73% and 63% respectively. In addition, the Gambia government and its development partners continue to provide skills training and income generating opportunities for the women folk. Women are also provided with labour saving devices with the objective of reducing drudgery to enable them engage in economic activities.

Madam Chair,

On the political front and ensuring gender parity in public appointments, the Gambia continues to make progress in these areas as the Vice President of the Gambia, is the longest serving woman Vice president in Africa. Furthermore, key government ministries such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Basic and Secondary Education, Energy and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly just to name a few and a host of other high level positions are manned by women.

Madam Chair,

The Gambia continues to promote the ideals of proper environment management for sustainable livelihood. The National Environment Agency was established and tasked to be the custodian of all environment related issues. In addition, the national environment policy, anti-littering regulations and the presidential directive of bimonthly national cleansing exercise are all geared towards ensuring environmental sustainability.

As the back-bone of the Gambia's economy, the government continues to formulate sound agricultural policies and strategies and have been registering success in the agricultural sector since then. Recently, The Gambia received an FAO award in Rome Italy for halving hunger and under-nourishment reduced from 13.3% in 1990-92 to 6% in 2014. This noble and well-deserved achievement, not only symbolizes pride, but also a morale booster to the entire farming community , more so the women, towards Vision 2016, which is geared towards the Attainment of Food Security in The Gambia.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the gains mentioned above, the Gambia like any other developing country, continues to face challenges in our effort to integrate population issues in to sustainable development. Key among these include the increasing population growth rate of 2.7 in 2003 to 3.1 in 2013. In addition, adolescent fertility resulting in

unwanted pregnancies, abortions and sexual transmitted infections including HIV and Aids are all challenges the country continues to face. Increasing population density of 127 persons per square kilometre in 2003 to 174 persons per square kilometre in 2013. Moreover, funding gaps still exist in our efforts to integrate population issues in to sustainable development. We therefore call on all developing partners to increase the resource envelope for population and development in the Gambia.

In conclusion Madam Chair,

I wish to on behalf of The Gambia government thank the UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, PPD and all other development partners for their continuous support to population and development in the Gambia.

I thank you all for your kind attention.