



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

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STATEMENT

by

Hon. Ibrahim R. Bundu
Majority Leader in Parliament

at the

48th Session of the Commission on Population and Development
(Agenda Item 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: Realizing the
future we want - integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the
post-2015 Development Agenda)

New York, 14 April 2015

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Madam Chair,

At the outset, let me express warmest congratulations to you and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. Sierra Leone aligns itself with the statements delivered by South Africa and Niger on behalf of the Group of 77 & China and the African Group respectively.

Madam Chair,

The road towards the attainment of the MDGs has been bumpy, with some countries reporting relative success in reducing poverty and hunger, combating HIV/AIDS, reducing child and maternal mortality as well as improving access to primary education for all children. This notwithstanding, the challenges remain most daunting in many developing countries.

This is why the theme chosen for the 48th session - **“Realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda”** is both timely and apt; particularly as we move closer to the adoption of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

Sierra Leone’s vision for its socio-economic development as encapsulated in the Government’s **“Agenda for Prosperity”** seeks to provide improved standards of living for the people and to move the country to a middle income status by 2035. The Agenda for Prosperity focuses on eight pillars which are the roadmap to Sierra Leone Post-2015 Development Agenda.

As the sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda aspire to **“leave no one behind”**, the Government has been fully engaged with instituting and implementing policies relating to population issues, including but not limited to improving the healthcare sector, education, gender equality and women’s and youth empowerment, disability, and infrastructural development.

Madam Chair,

Health status fundamentally affects national productivity and is a critical input for long-term national development. Our Government has therefore over the years made substantial progress in strengthening existing healthcare programmes and introducing new policies and guidelines that will improve quality, affordability and accessibility to healthcare services. In 2010, government introduced the **Free Health Care** policy for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five that, though having attendant challenges, has proven to be a significantly rewarding initiative as pregnant women and children under five have had increased access to healthcare services.

The Sierra Leone 2013 Demographic and Health Survey suggested that appreciable progress is being made in the provision of basic health services for our people. Between 2008 and 2013, the total fertility rate

dropped from an average of 5.1 to 4.9 children in a woman's lifetime due to increased use of modern family planning methods among married women, which more than doubled from 7 to 16 percent. Antenatal care by skilled birth attendants increased from 87 to 97 percent and delivery by skilled birth services providers rose from 42 to 60 percent. Delivery at health facilities doubled from 25 to 54 percent while the rate of fully immunized children increased from 40 to 68 percent. Also, the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) against malaria for under-five children almost doubled from 26 to 49 percent. These are positive results that we celebrate as a country while redoubling our efforts to sustain them.

Madam Chair,

Sierra Leone strongly believes that young people can be an important vehicle for economic development and social change; provided that they are given the right start in life. In that respect, Government had reviewed the **National Youth Policy of 2003**, which consequently enabled the youths in making vital contributions to addressing the challenges that affect their general socio-economic welfare. Efforts to establish technical and vocational centers all over the country, and the public-private partnerships for providing the requisite education are targeted at improving the skills capacity and employability of the youths.

Madam Chair,

Sierra Leone duly acknowledges that creating national economic wealth depends on the development of the human resource capacity. Government has therefore introduced policies to further encourage **girl child education**. In addition to waiving tuition fees in the Free Education for all primary school children, Government pays for books and uniforms for girls in their three-year Junior Secondary schooling.

To ensure that women's voices and priorities are not only heard, but also acted upon, Government has made **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** a priority. To that end, significant national legislations relating to rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence, early or forced marriage, discrimination in inheritance, and property rights, among a few others, have been enacted to protect women's rights, empower them in society and enhance their mental health and well-being. Today, about half of the members of our Local Councils' Ward Committees are women. Beyond that, Sierra Leone has a record of successful women in the business sector and they also participate in different capacities in the Executive, Legislative and the Judiciary arms of Government.

In the energy sector, the "Barefoot Women's College" in the rural Port Loko District of Sierra Leone is providing training for rural women with limited or no formal education in solar energy technology. Women

that have gone through the training are now employed as solar technicians, maintaining solar light systems in their villages and are training other local women in their communities.

In agriculture, Government has been providing financial support and other forms of incentives to women with the aim of further empowering them to engage in small-scale commercial farming as well as to increase their production from backyard gardening and subsistent farming to a commercial scale farming.

Madam Chair,

On the issue of disability, the Sierra Leone Parliament ratified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** of 2006 in July 2009, which was followed by the passage of our **Disability Act of 2011**. A major achievement of that Act was the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disability, (NCPD). Significant progress has been made with regard to employment as well as social and political integration of people with disability.

Our Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the Commissioner of the NCPD are visually impaired, demonstrating Sierra Leone's commitment to and respect for the CRPD.

In an attempt to address challenges of the **ageing population**, Government is actively considering strategic policy initiatives in our national development framework to cater for the welfare of the aged.

Madam Chair,

Sierra Leone supports the view that the design and implementation of people-centered development programmes must be based on reliable, robust, accessible and timely **data** that reflect on past, current and projected changes in the number, age, sex, location and social as well as economic conditions of the population. In this regard, efforts are being made to improve our data collection and analysis for evidence-based decision-making, planning and development management by strengthening the National Statistics Office and creating a platform for the development of the National Statistical System (NSS) through the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).

Madam Chair,

As you may be aware, the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has caused unprecedented social and humanitarian devastation, accompanied by severe economic consequences. The disease has adversely impacted the impressive gains made in our national development in recent years and, regrettably, caused the unavoidable postponement of our 2014 National Population and Housing Census to December 2015. Fortunately and thankfully, we are now recording very encouraging signs of approaching the end of the tragic chapter, with single digits and quite often zero new cases countrywide.

Today, as I speak, there are several districts that have recorded zero new cases for over 100 days, a state of affairs that has brought our nation and the world diminished panic and a lot of comfort.

I would therefore like to seize this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, to reiterate our profound appreciation and sincere gratitude to all our bilateral friends and multilateral development partners, especially the UN Family, for their moral support and various invaluable contributions to our collective fight against the EVD. At the same time, let me also hasten to re-echo our appeal for your sustained support in the implementation of our **Post-Ebola Recovery Strategy** as we remain a resilient nation and a Government with reaffirmed commitment to stay our course and to deliver on our national development agenda.

I thank you.