

**Statement delivered by Zane Dangor, Special Adviser to the Minister of Social Development of South Africa to the United Nations on the occasion of the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission for Population Development 11- 15 April 2016**

**Madame Chairperson**

The South African delegation wishes to join other delegations in extending its warmest congratulations to you and other members of the Bureau on your election as Chair of the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development; under such an important theme “strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development Agenda”. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full cooperation and support during the deliberations at this session.

We are convinced that through your able stewardship, common ground can be reached on areas where there has been a level of consensus as well as agreement on areas where progress is needed, in order to contribute to the efficiency of the work of the Commission.

We would also like to take note of the reports presented and thank the relevant entities that produced them, for continuously updating us on the financial flows and implementation of the ICPD, among others. These remain essential to measure progress and addressing identified gaps and challenges.

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Uganda on behalf of the Africa Group.

At the very outset, the South African delegation wishes to affirm the importance of a negotiated resolution as an outcome of this Session. We are deeply concerned that the 2015 CPD did not have an outcome. This is an indication that as member states, we have not succeeded in carrying out our mandate. We hope that the gaps and challenges identified in the Twenty Year Review of the Implementation of the Plan of Action will remind and encourage us to work towards a consensual outcome to address them. It is for this reason that South Africa attaches great importance to a negotiated outcome for this session.

## Chairperson

In 1994, we set ourselves goals as the international community, guided by our common desire and collective vision to invest in our populations as key to economic development. These goals were recently reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is our global blueprint for development, including safeguards to advance comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all women and girls. These rights have featured prominently in efforts to respond to health challenges such as HIV/AIDS and recently, Ebola and Zika. More needs to be done to ensure that while health challenges affects all populations and need addressing, women and girls are not further disadvantaged due to lack of these rights.

While on the realisation of rights, the South African delegation does not believe in the false dichotomy between human rights and development as we see both as necessary and interdependent for a development process that puts people at the centre as stipulated in ICPD. This relationship is best articulated in the Declaration on the Right to Development, and in our case, also enshrined in the Constitution. Our constitution's explicit protection of human rights is shaped by our own history and experience of discrimination. This history and the struggle against all forms of discrimination has therefore made us committed the principle that no person should be subjected to discrimination or violence based on race, class, sex, religion, gender or sexual orientation or gender identity. It is the same value base that guides our stance on fighting for equality between countries and why we will always make our voices heard about exploitation and oppression of people in any form. This includes the oppression of people in the occupied territories of Palestine. We sincerely believe that no-one should be left behind.

## **Chairperson**

South Africa reaffirms its strong commitment to the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014. The Addis Ababa Declaration was adopted by Ministers responsible for Population in November 2013 and endorsed by African Heads of State and Government during the African Union Summit in January 2014. The Addis Ababa Declaration sets a forward-looking political agenda and context for Africa on population and development matters.

Since 1994, the South African Government has pursued a number of strategies aimed at better equipping young people to become economically independent. The fundamental principles of this approach are contained in the National Youth Policy (2015-2020), which recognises the vital role young people play in building South Africa, and seeks to ensure that there are processes and opportunities that allow young people to develop and realise their potential.

South Africa's National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (NDP) acknowledges that although the national population growth is slowing with an expected growth rate of 0.5% by 2030, there is a large youth and working-age population and proportionally fewer very old and very young. It is therefore critical that my country reaps the benefits of the demographic dividend. This will require investments in job creation, health including sexual and reproductive health and rights, family planning, education, skills and development, which will result in an increase in the per capita income.

## **Chairperson**

It was therefore opportune that South Africa, in partnership with the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS) recently hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> African Population Conference under the theme “Demographic Dividend in Africa: Prospects, Opportunities and Challenges”. The Conference provided a platform for continued advocacy on population and development matters in the country and the rest of the Continent, including reinforcing the shared vision that development is a process of enlarging people’s capabilities and ensuring that they enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. The 7<sup>th</sup> African Population Conference reaffirmed the relevance of the ICPD agenda and the importance that the African Continent attaches to population and development issues especially as they mark a distinct departure from the “population control” policies of the past to a real understanding and commitment to fundamental human rights and sustainable development which cannot be separated if we are to improve the lives of people.

On the margins of the African Population Conference, South Africa launched the Fifteen-Year Progress Review of the Implementation of the Population Policy for South Africa and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action at 20. While the report demonstrates that considerable progress has been made with the objectives of the Population Policy and ICPD Programme of Action through the many poverty alleviation programmes, it also identifies numerous challenges that South Africa will need to prioritise. The key priorities identified have been incorporated into the Government work programme and include the following:

- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) with a particular focus on adolescents;
- Gender Equality, Equity and the Empowerment of Women;
- Dynamics of a Changing Population Age Structure: Causes and Consequences; and
- Migration and Urbanisation.

As we turn our attention to the implementation phase of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the Twenty Year Review of the Implementation of the

PoA, it would be important for all Member States to consolidate the progress made over the past years and to accelerate action on key areas that require special attention as well as provide impetus to tackle emerging issues. This is necessary to ensure that the ICPD Agenda is reported on and addressed in a holistic manner.

I thank you