



**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations**

**Statement by
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Honourable Minister of Home Affairs of the
Kingdom of Swaziland**

At the

**50th session of the Commission on Population and
Development**

**General Debate on Agenda Item 3: (a) Actions for the further
implementation of the Programme of Action of the
International Conference on Population and Development at
the global, regional and national levels; and
(b) Special theme of the fiftieth session of the Commission
based on the Programme of Action of the International
Conference on Population and Development and the key
actions to accelerate its further implementation**

**New York
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Chairperson

Introduction

Let me congratulate you and your Bureau on your election and also commend you for the competent manner in which you have been directing the proceedings. I look forward to a fruitful session under your guidance.

The special theme for the Session ***“Changing population age structures and sustainable development”*** calls for the holistic implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. This is indeed an important theme especially for Africa as she continues to experience changes in age structure of her population.

Chairperson, *Demographic transition in Swaziland*

The Kingdom of Swaziland is experiencing a demographic transition. It is characterized by a youthful population whereby approximately 40% of the population is under 15 years of age. Overall, 52% of the population is below the age of 20 years and with a potential to grow. The changes in population age structure has provided a window of opportunity to the Kingdom of Swaziland.

The country has experienced declining Total Fertility Rates (TFR) over the years. A dramatic decline occurred during the last three decades from 6.4 children per woman in 1986 to 4.5 in 1997. In 2007, the decline went to 3.95 and to 3.3 in 2014.

Further, the changes in population age structure is characterized by a decrease in the proportion of children below the age of 15 years and an increase in the population in the productive age groups of 15 to 64 years. The main contributing factor to such a decline is the declining birth and death rates.

Overall, the dependent population has decreased whilst the working age population has been steadily increasing.

Chairperson,
A window of opportunity for the country

The above demographic transition has opened a window of opportunity for economic growth and poverty reduction for the Kingdom of Swaziland, particularly due to the decreasing ratio of dependents to the working-age population.

This implies that social programmes being supported by the Government that include Free Primary Education (FPE) and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Fund (OVC), among others, will gradually decrease, subsequently freeing resources for other productive investments and developments within the economy.

Chairperson
The demographic dividend

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland, supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is currently undertaking a study on the Demographic Dividend, the results of which will help in the scientific determination of the extent of the demographic window of opportunity available for the country.

Further, the study will serve as a useful tool to promote development and implementation of evidence-based development policies, plans and programmes. It will also provide policy guidance regarding the mix of investments that ought to be put in place to propel Swaziland towards reaping the demographic dividend.

Chairperson
Challenges

The theme of the 2017 African Union Summit is entitled: ***“Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth”***. It is a direct call to African countries to focus and give priority in ensuring that they don't miss the opportunity of reaping the demographic dividend, which means that appropriate policies and investments should be evidence based and be streamlined towards the youth.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is faced with challenges that have an impact on her youth. This includes early sexual debut; HIV infection; early marriage; sexual abuse; substance abuse; high unemployment; and teenage pregnancy, among others.

Nonetheless, there are intervention initiatives that are being implemented by the Government, especially on health issues including the Prevention of

Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) as well as the wider coverage of the supply of Anti-Retro Viral (ARV) medication, are now paying off. To this end, there is currently a high number of survivorship among the infants, children and the adult population.

Chairperson
Investing in youth

The youth constitutes the largest proportion of our population and can become game changers for turning the development of the country around.

There is still more work remaining to fully improve the efficiency and service provision in our main sectors of education and health and our development partners are implored to continue providing the much needed and required support.

To this end, the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland is fully aware of the critical importance of investing in young people especially in all sectors of the economy. The main areas of focus include education, health and employment creation and these are expected to fast-track the country's economic growth.

Chairperson
Conclusion

In conclusion, let me re-affirm the full commitment of the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland towards the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development, Programme of Action (ICPD-PoA) which is an integral component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is worth noting that challenges encountered over the past years, including the Economic and Financial meltdown and the unfavorable climatic conditions, have hampered the implementation of the ICPD agenda in the country. To this end, my delegation would appreciate assistance and support from our development partners.

Finally, Chairperson, let me once again congratulate you for the enabling manner in which you direct the proceedings.

I thank you all and may God bless you.