



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. RAYMOND SERGE BALÉ,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CONGO TO THE UN
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
AT THE 54th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

General Discussion

Monday 19 April 2021

Mr. Chairman

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as the Chair of the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development and extend my warmest congratulations the members of the bureau for their election and their work. We are confident that the 54th session of the CPD will be successful under your leadership. We thank the UN Secretary General and the Secretariat for the preparation of the comprehensive report and documentations for this session.
2. The African Group welcomes the special theme of this year's session: "**Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development**" and we would like to reaffirm our commitment to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. With the pandemic continuing to exacerbate food insecurity, hunger and poverty in different parts of the world, and undermining the overall progress towards achieving the SDGs, this year's theme is more than ever timely and relevant.
4. CPD54 coincides with the second year of the decade of action for the delivery on the SDGs. The African group believes that the theme is of utmost importance this year, particularly, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects. This is an opportunity to bring back consensus to the CPD process during a conjuncture when consolidating the different positions and focusing on what unites is more needed today than ever.
5. Combating hunger and ensuring food security, as a part of sustainable development goals, are among Africa's priorities and we believe that the CPD process during this session can be a success if there is a collective effort and a strong common will towards achieving a consensual outcome for CPD54.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of food security in Africa was very alarming. Many African countries have suffered from the negative effects of climate change, draughts, desertification, and land degradation, as well as other environmental challenges. A situation that has exacerbated due to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly, on food and agriculture commodities.
7. The African Group notes with deep concern the new worrisome projections by **the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** which underline that the prevalence of undernourishment in Africa will rise from 19.1 per cent in 2019 to 25.7 per cent in 2030, if recent rates of increase in hunger persist. Such an alarming situation requires an outburst of solidarity and an effective multilateral cooperation, North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, aiming to address undernourishment, ensure sufficient and

nutritious food and strengthen sustainable agricultural production capacities, productivity and food security in all developing countries, particularly in Africa. We also recognize the role of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia in this endeavour.

8. As the risk of hunger and child malnutrition could increase by up to 20 per cent owing to the adverse impacts of climate change, the African Group calls for stepping up actions to build resilience, investing in preparedness, mobilizing all sources to finance adaptation and mitigation strategies, and enhancing joint risk assessments and risk management strategies to cut the impact and cost of natural disasters to address the adverse effects of climate change on food security.
9. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development, and good nutrition is fundamental to achieving this goal. This is particularly true for pregnant and nursing women, women of reproductive age and adolescent girls, infants and young children.

Mr. Chairman

10. The African Group recognizes the crucial contributions of rural women to local and national economies and to food production and to achieving food security and improved nutrition. It is a proven fact that on every continent, the prevalence of food insecurity is higher among women than men. In the COVID-19 context, food scarcity and restricted mobility during lockdowns have placed women and girls at a higher risk of gender-based violence. On these grounds, the Group stresses on the need to invest in and strengthen efforts to support the empowerment of all women and girls, in particular those living in rural settings, to address their own food and nutritional needs and those of their families and ensure women's access to productive assets, inputs and services, including land, livestock, labour, quality education and lifelong learning, health care services, financial inclusion as well as improving transportation systems, electricity supplies and adequate technology. Ensuring that women have the same access to productive resources as men could generate significantly increased yields on farms owned or operated by women.
11. The African Group would like to seize this opportunity to welcome the initiative by the Secretary-General to convene the Food Systems Summit in 2021 as part of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal. Ahead of this important event summit, we can't dismiss the crucial interlinkage between the adaptation to climate change, moving to more sustainable energy solutions, building resilience and ensuring food security and reliable food systems.

12. The Commission has a long history of adopting resolutions by consensus. However, it has been unable to reach consensus on a resolution on its special theme since 2016. So, It is critical that the Commission reaches a meaningful outcome during this year's session. The African group stresses and values the pressing need to adopt a consensual CPD54 Resolution.

13. In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the Group cannot stress enough the importance to ensure Global, equitable, affordable and timely access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and health-care services, including as supported through the COVAX Facility, especially in low- and middle-income countries, accelerating the global recovery and contributing to putting an end to the pandemic.

I thank you.