



STATEMENT BY Mr. BABOUCARR BOUY

MINISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE 57TH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT (UNCPD) ON THE THEME

***"Assessing the status of implementation of the
Programme of Action of the International Conference on
Population and Development (ICPD) and its contribution
to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, during
the decade of action and delivery for sustainable
development"***

29TH APRIL -3RD MAY 2024, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES

Mr Chairman,

It is indeed an honour and great pleasure for me and my delegation to be given this opportunity to share with the distinguished delegates the experience of The Gambia in the implementation of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action and agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

The Programme of Action remains the cornerstone of our collective efforts towards attaining sustainable development. Our commitment to the ideals of the ICPD POA, charters and protocols that advance the agenda of population and development particularly the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights and enhancing the decision-making powers of women and youth at all levels, has been manifested in our national development plans and policies and most recently, the Recovery Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP) 2023–2027 locally called “YIRWAA”.

We continue to strongly believe in the principles of universal access to reproductive health and services including HIV/Aids, and that women be given the right to decide freely the timing and number of children they wish to have. We have indeed recognized that universal access to reproductive health and services are a prerequisite for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We continue to demonstrate high political will in providing health services to all Gambians at affordable prices and most importantly the provision of free maternal and child health services in public health facilities. Numerous social protection schemes including the National Health Insurance, social security and pension schemes among others have been established to alleviate poverty and promote inclusion. In the recent past, the government of the Gambia initiated health system strengthening and staff retention programmes and established male clinics to encourage male participation in RH issues, especially during the pregnancy and delivery of their partners.

Similarly, the First Lady's "Safe the Baby Initiative" continues to contribute immensely towards addressing maternal and newborn health. Immunization coverage is near universal in the country (85%). Furthermore, malaria prevention and management during pregnancy; an integral element of reproductive health services in the Gambia, is still a source of envy in the sub-region. The same is true for access to health service delivery points as over 85% of the population is within 5 kilometres of a primary health care post.

Notable among the key achievements since 1994, are: the impressive improvement in girls' education and women empowerment and development, and government support to ensuring the availability of timely and accurate demographic data.

We have made commendable strides in the improvement of school enrolment at both primary and secondary levels for both sexes, leading to the attainment of gender parity in educational access at both levels.

Mr Chairman,

Women in the Gambia actively take part in all human endeavours from homes, farms to managing the affairs of the state machinery as they have had greater access to productive resources and institutional support services.

We have also forged partnerships at all levels to tackle sexual and gender-based violence. The Gambia government has successfully legislated laws banning Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and has integrated SGBV in various schools curricula. This and many other interventions have led to a decline in the number of young women marrying before 18 years old from 25% to 19% over the past 25 years.

Mr Chairman,

The Gambia has instituted youth empowerment programmes to promote youth participation in the labour force and decision making. Youth employment and skills development schemes have been initiated to address the perennial problem of youth

migration. Programs like the National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI) and the Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) provide training, mentorship, and financial support to young entrepreneurs for them to use innovations to create jobs.

Mr. Chairman,

Government has invested significantly over the years in human, materials and financial resources in addressing population, health and development issues which have yielded positive results. For example, TFR has declined from 6.01% to 5.6% and 4.4% from 1993 to 2013 and 2019 respectively; maternal mortality ratio has declined from 1050 to 730, 433 and 289 per 100,000 live births in 1990, 1993, 2013 and 2019 respectively.

Mr. Chairman

While counting successes in implementing the ICPD programme of action, we continue to face a number of challenges which include resources inadequacies, a youthful population and prevalence of GBV which continues to impede the growth, health, and development of a significant number of women, children, and girls in The Gambia, posing formidable obstacles to women's empowerment and inclusion.

The Gambia still remains one of the most densely populated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (a population density estimated

at 127 persons per square kilometres). It is worth noting that the high population density if unchecked may pose challenges both in terms of environmental sustainability and agricultural production.

Mr. Chairman

Despite all the challenges outlined above, the Government of the Gambia is still committed to managing the population resource in order to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development and ultimately improve the quality of life of all Gambians. We will continue to prioritize investments in reproductive health, gender equality, promote the rights and dignity of all individuals, and strengthen partnerships to ensure that no one is left behind. Our vision is clear: a Gambia where every person can thrive and reach their full potential.

Call to Action:

To conclude, I call on all member states to redouble our efforts to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, eliminate gender-based violence, empower women and girls and uphold the rights of everyone. Together, we can build a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable world for present and future generations.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.s