



57th Session of the Commission on Population and Development
Statement by
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Mr. Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Today, as we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the inception of the historic International Conference of Population and Development, it is incumbent upon all of us to revisit the progress made in the implementation of the same and to determine the areas need to be improved in the coming years, in relation to the practical realities that the world is undergoing today.

We are in a world where the population is more than three times larger than it was in the mid-twentieth century. The global human population reached 8.1 billion in 2024 from an estimated 2.5 billion people in 1950, adding 1 billion people since 2010 and 2 billion since 1998. This number is expected to increase by nearly 2 billion persons in the next 30 years, from the current 8 billion to 9.7 billion in 2050 and could peak at nearly 10.4 billion in the mid-2080s.

In the above context, in the Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is very important that we take note of the rapid population growth trends as it necessitates the expansion of the scale of investments need to satisfy the basic needs and assure protection for all. Countries with growing populations have the potential for demographic dividend once the fertility declines. However, this will only become a reality only if people have quality education, good health and decent work.

When the ICPD 25 was held in Nairobi in the year 2019, the world was able to witness the positive side of the initial inception of the ICPD in 1994, such as the 25 % prevalence rate of the global contraceptive prevalence. While we should commend all the stakeholders involved for the achievements made, we are of the view that we must not be complacent and let the progress slow down at this point.

Mr. Chair,

Even though ICPD was primarily intended to provide systematic and comprehensive integrated approach to the population issues, the developing countries are still facing a number of difficulties, stemming from the unfavorable economic environment. At the time we are speaking today, more than 2 billion people still live in poverty and remain left out of this progress. The great challenge

leaders of the world face today is to reduce poverty and inequity, and improve people's lives without compromising the environment and the well-being of future generations.

Hence, when recognizing the importance of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we should also assess the new realities of the world. Today, in the post-pandemic era, we are facing scourge of ongoing conflicts in the world, their spillover impacts on all the other regions, in addition to the triple planetary crisis, scarcity of food and water, access to decent jobs and sustainable energy.

Mr Chair,

Notwithstanding these challenges, my own country Sri Lanka, has made significant strides in advancing its health and development objectives in the last year. The investment made by successive governments in Sri Lanka on education and healthcare have resulted in impressive social development indicators that the country has managed to sustain even in the midst of financial and economic constraints. There have also been a number of welfare measures undertaken. For example, in coordination with UNFPA, Sri Lanka has introduced a National Bereavement Care Package in 2023. Under this system, evidence-based care pathways are furnished to the professionals engaged in providing bereavement care to patients and families. In addition to the above, in partnership with Sri Lanka Medical Association, Perinatal Society of Sri Lanka, and Menopause Society of Sri Lanka, UNFPA took steps to facilitate advocacy dialogues highlighting the significance of integrating sexual and reproductive health and justice into healthcare sectors. These dialogues were based on critical topics such as challenges in midlife fertility, women's ability to make choices, and addressing gaps in disability during the pregnancy.

Recognizing the pivotal role of women and girls in achieving inclusive and sustainable development, the government of Sri Lanka has in place a national policy on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Our free education system has contributed in a substantial manner to achieving gender parity in education enrollment and high female completion rates. Despite this, women's participation in formal employment remains low. To address this, Sri Lanka is in the process of enacting relevant legislation to remove barriers to women's participation and promote full and productive employment and decent work.

We are also implementing a national action plan to enhance prevention and response to gender-based violence, addressing the root cause, including harmful social and gender norms. In addition, in an endeavor to neutralize toxic masculinity we are engaging men and boys in tailor made programs to address violence and promote gender equality.

Over the years, our free universal health policy has enabled us to achieve commendable progress in sexual and reproductive health. The unmet need for family planning is 7.5% and Maternal mortality is at 29.5 per 100,000 live births, among the lowest in South Asia. We are continuing to invest in improving sexual and reproductive health services and enabling young persons to gain better access to information, particularly on gender, sexuality, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.

Our advancements in health, and education among others, have contributed to a decline in the fertility rate moving to replacement levels of fertility and achieving life expectancy above 70 years. As a result, we are experiencing a rapid pace of population aging in Sri Lanka with 1 in 5 people projected to be above the age of 60 years by 2030. We are committed to addressing this demographic shift by promoting women and youth engagement in economic activity, redesigning our social protection system to provide universal coverage, promoting healthy aging and safeguarding reproductive rights and choices for all.

Mr. Chair,

We are cognizant that despite the progress made in the ICPD, several gaps remain in the implementation. In this regard, voluntary commitments made by the Member States to further the 2030 Agenda are of high importance.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka reiterates its commitment to the ICPD. It is our strong belief that reviewing the progress made by the ICPD at this milestone would provide us with the catalyst to determine the road map of the ICPD and focus on our priorities in a pragmatic and meaningful manner. Sri Lanka is committed to realizing these aspirations for the betterment of our societies and the planet we live, in the times to come.

I thank you

