

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Michel Blokland
Minister of Health of the Republic of Suriname
At the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development
New York, 8 april 2014

Madame Chair,

Distinguished Members of the Bureau of the 47th Commission on Population and Development,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement presented by the distinguished representative of CELAC. We would like to thank the UN System, and in particular UNFPA, for the global ICPD review which we welcome and endorse, as well as the Secretary General's report on the 'Framework of action for the follow up to the Programme of Action of ICPD Beyond 2014'. Both documents adequately reflect our active input in the global survey but also the important discussions and agreements that were reached at the regional review meetings.

As concluded in the report, the ICPD process resulted in many important achievements but also revealed the continuation of persistent structures of gender inequality and social exclusion, and the need for strengthening, intensifying and expansion of our responses in an integrated manner, and taking into consideration new challenges and a changing socio-economic, political and cultural context.

The ongoing global crisis impose great challenges to our economy and our future, but as a country we are determined to transfer our current economic growth into human development that is equal for women and men, and with the continued cooperation between all partners in society. We share the conviction that it is from a rights based and gender perspective that we should continue to invest in human capital, equity and dignity throughout the life-course as the foundation of sustained economic growth and sustainable development for everybody.

We consider the 47th session of the CPD as critical in the discussion on how the identified gaps and challenges will be addressed and how this knowledge and real experiences from the populations we

represent can best feed into the post 2015 development agenda. In reviewing the ICPD process and the way forward we think it is of utmost importance to closely link to other key development agenda's such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDG's, and draw on previously regional agreed conclusions, in particular the Montevideo consensus which was also fully endorsed by our government.

At this point in time, 20 years after Cairo, Suriname has made significant progress in reflecting the spirit and ideals of the Program of Action of ICPD through the adoption of international and national legislation, institutional strengthening and the development of a wide variety of strategies, policies and programs in the area of gender equality, women's rights, gender mainstreaming, and strengthening of our education, primary healthcare and social protection system.

In our national response we are guided by our national development plan and specific national policies in the area of youth, sexual and reproductive health and rights, safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS, adolescent health and cervical cancer. To reach vulnerable groups we have developed specific programs, among others for adolescents, mothers and children, people in the interior, and most at risk populations.

We have achieved gender parity in primary education and in the secondary and tertiary levels the enrollment of women far more exceeds that of men. Access to education has been improved through the removal of all school fees in primary and secondary education and the establishment of a national after school program, where all children receive daily free meals, home work guidance and sporting activities.

Improved access to maternal health services resulted in 91% of pregnant women with at least one prenatal visit, 93% of all deliveries attended by skilled health personnel, and a reduction of maternal mortality to 48/100.000 in 2012.

In the area of HIV/AIDS, the increase of HIV knowledge, testing, early treatment and the implementation of a successful national PMTCT program resulted in a declining HIV and AIDS curve.

Children in the age group 0-16 years as well as senior citizens, aged 60 years and older are entitled to free healthcare. In the area of violence against women, domestic legislation have been adopted and capacity of service providers has been strengthened through training and guidance in order to improve quality of services to victims of violence.

Recently the HPV vaccine has been introduced to prevent and control cervical cancer. The government forbid removal of pregnant girls of schools, and also has a special program to provide guidance and

support to teen mothers aimed at continuation of their school career, prevention of a second unintended pregnancy, and increase their opportunities for decent employment. Sexual education is an essential part of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools.

Despite our national gains we acknowledge that the achievements have been uneven and that there are still many disparities in access to education, health, social protection, and protection of basic human rights, that are closely related to the persistent impact of structural socio economic and cultural barriers on people's lives.

Much more integrated human and financial investments are needed to further promote and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights and reduce complicated issues such as the high rates of teenage pregnancy, unsafe abortions and violence against women and children. More effective policies and effective measurements are needed to ensure that in accordance with our constitution all people, women and men, boys and girls, without any form of discrimination, can live a life that is free from violence and poverty. We recognize new emerging challenges to population and development, such as the rapid growth of our urban populations and changes in family structures, the unmet need of the youth, the elderly and persons with living with disabilities, increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases, the changing migration patterns, climate change and the increased risk of natural disasters, the need for decentralization and inclusion of marginalized populations including indigenous populations, in national development processes.

We expect that we will agree on the necessity of an advance agenda and an outcome document that builds on the subsequent intergovernmental agreements which are based on the lessons learned, the identified gaps and the recognition that development should be human rights based and therefore all inclusive.

We finally would like to reiterate that it is critical that we continue in the spirit of the ICPD, and therefore strongly reaffirm our political will to the objectives of the Program of Action of ICPD, and expect the recommendations of the secretary general in the global review report will be reflected in the outcome document.

Thank you