

ALGERIA



الجزائر

Permanent Mission of Algeria
to the United Nations
New York

بعثة الجزائر الدائمة
لدى الأمم المتحدة
نيويورك

STATEMENT BY:

**H.E. MR. MOURAD BENMEHIDI,
AMBASSADOR PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ALGERIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
BEFORE THE 45th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPEMENT**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 4
“ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH”**

New York, 23 April 2012

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. Allow me first to congratulate you and your bureau for being elected as Chair and Bureau members of the 45th session of the Commission on Population and Development as well as to commend the excellent manner in which you are conducting the Session.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports and we take note of the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. Chairman,

More than half of Africa's population is young and what that represents is an asset for socio-economic development, if one also takes into account the size of the whole African population. Indeed, this is why the theme of this session "**Adolescents and Youth**" warrants positive consideration.

In recognizing this asset, our Heads of State and Government in January 2009 proclaimed 2009-2018 as the Decade for Youth Development and Empowerment which is a common declaration to engage the youth in all development programs.

The decade presents an opportunity to advance the agenda of youth development in all member states across the African Union, to ensure effective and more ambitious investment in youth development programmes and increased support to the development and implementation of national youth policies and programmes. The African Union set the pace for the implementation of the decade

through initiatives during the Year of African Youth in 2008, through its implementation of non-formal technical, vocational and educational training programmes in post conflict countries; strengthening of youth organisations through the revitalization process of the Pan African Youth Union, and the development of a plan of action to promote youth development through the effective implementation of the African Youth Charter which was promulgated in 2006.

Mr. Chairman,

During the decade, the AU Commission and member states will collectively implement the AU's 10 year plan of action on youth development in Africa, which will focus on priority areas for youth development in member states, as outlined in the African Youth Charter. Priority issues that need to be addressed for the empowerment of African youth include: education, employment, safe spaces for recreation and leisure, participation in policy-making processes at national, regional and continental levels, and health issues. These will be clearly addressed within the plan of action for the decade 2009-2018.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group recognizes the importance of paying special attention to adolescents and youth, particularly those that are marginalized including unskilled, out of school, unemployed youth, youth living in rural areas, youth living with HIV, youth with disabilities, youth in situations of armed conflict and girls and young women.

It is therefore pertinent that we address the challenges our adolescents and youth face many such as human trafficking, especially of young women and girls, substance abuse, social exclusion, child and forced

marriages, unintended pregnancies, maternal mortality, new HIV infections and discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

Young people, as much as all people, have the right to the enjoyment of the highest standard of physical and mental health, including reproductive health, but there are also compelling policy reasons for investing in young people's health and development. A supportive environment needs to be created for young people as they make the transition to adulthood. We need to invest in young people; promote their human rights and fundamental freedoms and gender equality; provide access to reproductive health information and health care services; encourage their education and social integration; ensure protective measures and safe spaces for the most vulnerable among them, including those in humanitarian situations; and support enabling policies and legal frameworks for their participation in policymaking. This needs to be done with the full cooperation and support of parents, families and other community leaders and actors.

There is no doubt that, policy frameworks should reflect the understanding where poverty, education, reproductive health and gender equality are linked in complex ways and across generations. For example, poverty is one of the main causes of unequal access to education, creating a compound disadvantage for girls of secondary-school age.

Girls' lack of education combined with their already low economic status reduces their autonomy and self-esteem, so they are at enhanced risk for sexual exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, unintended pregnancy and gender-based violence. They are likely to remain poor and powerless and to pass on their disadvantages to their children.

Mr. Chairman,

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation highlighted greater equality for the girl child as a necessary first step for women to realize their full potential and become equal partners in development.

Investing in girls benefits not only the girls themselves but also their families, communities and countries over many generations. Educated and healthy adolescent girls equipped with life skills will stay in school longer and complete their education. Investing in their empowerment will help to accelerate the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the fact that Africa has made positive gains in this context, one of our biggest challenges is that of resources. Our continent has been challenged by the ongoing adverse impact of the financial and economic crisis, volatile food prices and ongoing concerns over food security, as well as the increasing challenges posed by climate change and the loss of biodiversity, all of which have increased vulnerabilities and inequalities and have adversely affected our development gains.

We therefore reiterate our call upon our development partners for enhanced cooperation and concerted action, including through the transfer of technology and international cooperation to impart needed knowledge and skills to our youth and above all to address these challenges.

In conclusion, **Mr. Chairman**, the African Group wishes to reiterate its commitment to the development of its future generations as including through the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.