



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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DIRECTOR-GENERAL

NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION

ON

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTHS

(NIGERIA EXPERIENCE)

AT THE

45TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON POPULATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCP&D)

NEW YORK, APRIL 24TH, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Nigeria delegation, I congratulate and express our warm regards to you and the members of the Bureau on your appointment and to pledge our support and cooperation towards the successful conduct of this session .

Mr. Chairman,

Adolescents and Youths constitute the stock of Nigeria's present and future pride, leaders, workforce, parents, strength, hope, prosperity, opportunities, development, progress, existence, peace and security as well as a huge challenge to overcome and reap the benefits associated with their potentials.

Currently, Nigeria's population is estimated at over 167 million making it the 7th most populated country in the world and has the largest cohort of Adolescents and Youth in Africa [and second to Asia]. Adolescents and Youth segment of our population has continued to grow over the last two decades, with the Adolescents population increasing from about 12 million in 1991 to 19.5 million in 2006 and currently estimated at over 23 million. Similarly, population of Youths has increased from 11.3 million in 1991 to 19.9 million in 2006 and is presently estimated to reach about 23.8 million.

Another population segment of concern is the proportion of females age 15-19 years (which cuts across Adolescent and Youths) because of their contribution to high Fertility. This segment constituted 10.8 percent of the total population in 1991; it slightly decreased to 10.7 percent in 2006, and then increased to 11.0 percent in 2011. Overall, the proportion of the population age 12-24 years in 1991, 2006 and 2011 constituted over one quarter of the total population (26.1 percent in 1991; 27 in percent in 2006 and 28 percent in 2011). This proportion is expected to reach about 30 percent in 2020.

Based on the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), 23 percent of our teenage girls are already mothers or likely to be pregnant with their first child and half of our women are already married at age 18, while 1 in 5 are married at age 15. Also, their sexual and reproductive behavioural pattern shows that 1 in 5 women are sexually active by age 15 and the median age for onset of sexual activity among young women is 17.7 years with a 4.7 low utilization rate of modern family planning method. Although the HIV prevalence rate among young people in Nigeria shows a consistent decline between the period of 2001 to 2010 (6.0% in 2001, 5.3% in 2003, 4.3% in 2005, 4.2 in 2008, 4.1 in 2010), the epidemic continues to present a sore point at this time of our national development and a huge burden on the economy in general.

Mr. Chairman,

Adolescents and Youths in Nigeria are faced with challenges of extreme poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, exploitation, violence, malnutrition and diseases. In particular, adolescent girls are vulnerable to unique health problems arising from under-age child bearing, unwanted pregnancies resulting in unsafe abortion and high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, child mortality, sexual exploitation and abuse. These groups of person have limited access to appropriate adolescents' sexual reproductive health

information and services. Also, they constitute about two third of the estimated 610,000 abortions recorded yearly and nearly 60 percent of annual new HIV infection.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria is signatory to several international agreements and obligations targeted at Adolescents and Youth empowerment and development and has accordingly enacted policies and Action Plan to propel the implementation of these policies in order to address their plight. Some of these policies include:

- i. National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development – 2004;
- ii. National Policy on the Health and Development of Adolescents and Young People in Nigeria and its National Strategic Framework – 2007;
- iii. National Youth Policy (2008);
- iv. National Reproductive Health Policy – 2010; and
- v. Action Plan for Advancing Young People's Health and Development in Nigeria: 2010 – 2012.

Mr. Chairman,

The Nigerian Government has taken cognizance of the growing challenges associated with Adolescents and Youths health and social issues and is committed to prioritizing investments aimed at equipping and developing young people in order to safeguard our future. A Ministry for Youth Development was established in 2007 as part of the Nigerian Government's effort to address the socio-economic challenges of its adolescents and youths. The Ministry has responsibility of coordinating all policies, plans and strategies aimed at promoting the health and development of adolescents and youths in Nigeria.

In addition, the government also hosted a high level National Consultative Forum on the Health and Development of Young People in Nigeria in June 2010. The purpose of the forum was to garner political support and commitments for the implementation of adolescent and youth friendly policies and plans in Nigeria. To further address the high rate of unemployment, the government recently launched a National Youth Employment Programme which is aimed at empowering Nigeria youths with skills and resources for gainful employment.

Similarly, the Government has established Youth Friendly Health Facilities in some parts of the country as pilots for nationwide scale up in due course. This is to enable adolescents and youth access reproductive health services without inhibitions.

Also the Government of Nigeria in her desire to provide the youths with basic education recently commissioned the first phase of boarding schools for young itinerant Islamic scholars in the North West of Nigeria. The plan is to establish 100 of these schools each year for the next four years to accommodate all the vulnerable youths in Northern Nigeria.

Furthermore, in February 2011, Nigeria commenced the vaccination of girls between 9-15 years against the Human Papilloma Virus to protect them from cervical cancer. While trying to create demand for this intervention, government, in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) is subsidizing the cost to make it affordable for families.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria is optimistic of becoming one of the leading and progressive economies in the world by Year 2020 and the present structure of the population which is basically young presents a huge potential for realizing that vision. Thus, the present administration is committed to making huge investments in the health and development of adolescents and youths especially, their sexual and reproductive health to enable us translate quantity to quality and turn our current liabilities into future assets that will grow and sustain our economy. Specifically, the government of Nigeria is committed to strengthening primary prevention strategy that is especially targeted at adolescents and youths in order to reduce the high burden of HIV/AIDS epidemic by ensuring that reproductive health commodity is available to young people through the removal of user fees.

Thank you.