



UGANDA

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Statement

By

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Delegation**

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Development**

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Mr/Madam Chairperson
Executive Director of UNFPA,
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Uganda delegation, I would like to thank the UN Secretary General and the UNFPA for the excellent arrangements they have made for us for this meeting.

Uganda, has of recent made good progress in addressing its population and reproductive health challenges. Our most recent Census 2014 has shown us that children born in Uganda today are expected to live an average life of over 63 years. This is compared to a life expectancy of only 50 years in the Census of 2002/3. Similarly, mortality of both women and children in Uganda is on the decline. For example, infant mortality rate has declined from 71 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016, while the under-five mortality reduced from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 64 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. There has also been an improvement in maternal health indicators in Uganda. Maternal mortality ratio declined from 438 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011 to 368 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016.

The contraceptive prevalence rate has increased from 30% in 2011 to 39% in 2016, while the unmet need for family planning among the married women reduced from 34% to 28%. It is worth noting that deliveries in health facilities significantly increased from 59% in 2011 to 73% in 2016 while, total fertility rate declined from 6.2 children per woman in 2011 to 5.4 children per woman in 2016.

Despite the progress made in addressing these challenges, teenage pregnancy remains a major challenge in Uganda at 25 % and this has contributed to high fertility of 5.4 children per woman and a resultant high population growth rate of 3 % per annum.

Due to this high fertility, Uganda has a youthful population which forms the base of the country's population structure. According to the Census of 2014, 16.6 million Ugandans (47.9%) were below 15 years of age. Having a youthful population means that the country's population will continue to increase because of the large cohorts of young women entering their childbearing

years (population momentum). This has serious implications if Uganda has to change its population age structure.

It further implies that there will be a large number of young dependents. The age dependency ratio remains unfavorably high at 103 despite a slight decline from 110 in 2002, implying that there is still a heavy economic burden that the productive population has to bear.

Uganda's high total fertility rate is attributed to a number of factors including early sexual debut (at 16.8 years in females and 18.6 years for males); high teenage pregnancy (at 25%); a relatively low modern contraceptive prevalence rate (35%); and cultural practices that encourage large family size. High fertility poses major challenges for safe motherhood, child survival and sustainable development.

Distinguished delegates

In Uganda, we have realized that our largely youthful population will continue to pose a big challenge for sustainable development unless we invest in it in a very deliberate and focused manner.

In this regard, the Uganda Government, in 2014, commissioned a study to explore the possibility that the country can harness a Demographic Dividend. The Report from the study emphasises that the starting point is to initiate a demographic transition by ensuring a rapid decline in fertility. If such a fertility decline can be fast enough and this is coupled with well-coordinated policies and focussed long-term investments, the country stands a good chance to benefit from a demographic dividend.

It is against this background that in Uganda, we are focussing our efforts on ensuring universal access to family planning, coupled with ensuring better child survival and female education. Uganda's roadmap for harnessing the demographic dividend also envisages investments in game changers in the key sectors of health, education, economy (especially job creation) and governance.

In this regard, Uganda will, in the next several decades, intensify its family planning programme and reduce fertility considerably. Within Government, we are ensuring strong population and reproductive health coordination mechanisms. The country will also ensure empowerment of women and female education as well as curb the high levels of school dropout and teenage pregnancies, all which will help reduce fertility.

The government has invested heavily in education and supported the Universal Primary Education (UPE). This has enabled us increase enrolment from 2.7 million children in 1996 to 8.2 million to-date, with the ratio of girls to boys in schools being equal. We have now embarked on universal secondary education (USE) as we improve the quality of education and also reduce the dropout rate especially for the girl child.

In line and consistent with SDGs and African Union Agenda 2063, the Government of Uganda recently launched the 2016 Youth Policy and Action Plan as a positive step towards empowering the youth. The Action Plan provides an operational framework to all actors with guidelines from which programmes and services can be developed to facilitate meaningful involvement of youth in national development efforts and to respond to their real needs, be they skills, jobs, among others.

The government has put in place Youth Livelihood Programmes to help young people access interest free soft loans to engage in income generating projects. We are continuing to equip our young people with the relevant training and skills so that the country can benefit from the demographic dividend.

Distinguished delegates

In conclusion, let me state that Uganda is committed to the SDGs, the AU 2063 Agenda and all these are also aligned to our country's National Development Plan as well as our Vision 2040, which aims to achieve a transformed society from a peasant to a prosperous country within 30 years.

Thank you.