



52ND SESSION OF THE

COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

STATEMENT BY

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Mr President

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me, on behalf of the Republic of Mauritius, to convey my sincere congratulations on your election to the 52nd Session of the Committee on Population and Development, as well as to your Bureau.

I also wish to reassure this Meeting that Mauritius is fully committed to the endeavours being envisaged and measures being undertaken at this juncture in a bid to ensure that the population and development portfolio becomes indivisible to the wider global integration agenda.

Mr President

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to mention here that Mauritius has participated in the whole process of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), from Cairo onwards, 1994 to Accra in 2018 during the review of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development, five years after its adoption.

Mauritius has also made a national assessment of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, updating the indicators of priority targets for our country.

Throughout these twenty-five years of implementation of the ICPD agenda, I have noted with satisfaction the intensification of cooperation between the Government of Mauritius and UNFPA. This has resulted in meaningful support for the implementation of gender and youth policies, institutional support to the Mauritian Institute of Health which will be upgraded to a center of excellence for training in family planning, maternal and newborn health in the region.

The status of review in the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action during the past 25 years and the Sustainable Development Agenda reveals significant progress in our country, notwithstanding some challenges.

Mauritius is at a very advanced stage of its demographic transition characterized by relatively low levels of fertility and mortality. Total fertility rate decreased from 5.86 in 1962 to 3.42 in 1972; it is now below replacement level, averaging 1.37 children per woman. Life expectancy at birth increased from 65 in 1965 to 75 in 2018.

Family planning has come a long way in Mauritius. Contraceptive prevalence is estimated at 63.8% in 2014 for women in union. About 32% practice modern contraception. The supply of contraceptive products is 54.8% provided by the Government, followed by the private sector (34.7%). However, there are unmet needs for family planning estimated at 12.5%. About 10% of women suffer from infertility problems.

Maternal health has improved. The maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 49 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

This demographic dynamic is accompanied by significant changes in the age structure that results in an aging population. The proportion of people aged 65 and over increased from 6.3% in 2000 to 10.6% in 2017. Population projections indicate that the population could begin to decline from 2022, while the proportion of people aged 65 and over could be as high as 27.3% in 2057.

The Mauritian economy has experienced, in recent years, a relatively strong growth ranging between 4% and 6% since independence. Economic diversification and good governance have been key determinants of economic performance. Poverty has declined access to basic social services including education and health has improved.

In terms of gender equality, Mauritius has made great progress. It has ratified a number of international and continental human rights instruments that protect

women's rights and promote gender equality. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Optional Protocol on Violence against Women and of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Mr President,

The introduction of free education at all levels, as well as the introduction of compulsory education upto the age of 16 in 2005, has increased girls' enrollment rates. The government supported schooling by allowing:

- (i) pregnant students attend school even after giving birth;
- (ii) access to free transportation for all students;
- (iii) the free supply of textbooks to children in primary schools.

This has led not only to near-universal enrollment at pre-primary and primary levels, but also to high transition rates to upper secondary education. More girls than boys are moving from primary to secondary education, and the gender gap is in favor of girls at secondary and tertiary levels.

The government is working to support the poorest sections of the population through social reintegration programs.

Mr President,

Currently, our country is facing the consequences of demographic changes whose economic repercussions are likely to be catastrophic if we are not careful today. It is high time that Mauritius adopts an ambitious population policy, able to address the issues of population aging and low fertility in order to ensure the well-being of the population.

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has developed a protocol for the development of the National Population Policy. I would like, on this occasion, to express my gratitude to the United Nations Fund for Population, which has provided technical support for the development of population policy whose major objective is to meet the challenges caused by the demographic changes taking place in Mauritius.

The policy of the Government is now oriented towards a paradigm shift from reaching demographic targets to a long term vision for the sustainable development of the country. In this context the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) project is being implemented to make Mauritius a world model of sustainable development, particularly in the context of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Thank you for your attention.