



General Assembly

Twenty-ninth special session

1st meeting

Monday, 22 September 2014, 1 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Temporary President: Mr. Kutesa (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 1.05 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Uganda

The Temporary President: I declare open the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly, on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014.

As representatives are aware, this special session is being held pursuant to resolutions 65/234, of 22 December 2010, and 67/250, of 21 February 2013, and serves to assess the status of implementation of the Programme of Action and to renew political support for actions required for the full achievement of its goals and objectives.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President: I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/S-29/2)

The Temporary President: I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the

attention of the General Assembly to document A/S-29/2, concerning Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Appointment of members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President: In accordance with decision 69/505, of 19 September 2014, the Credentials Committee of the twenty-ninth special session has already been appointed and consists of the same membership as that of the sixty-ninth regular session of the Assembly, namely, Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Denmark, Jamaica, Namibia, Senegal, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

In that context, may I invite the attention of the members of the Assembly to a note verbale from the Secretary-General, dated 11 July 2014, in which it is stated that credentials should be issued for all representatives to the special session in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I would urge all members to submit the credentials of their representatives to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Election of the President

The Temporary President: I now invite the Assembly to proceed to the election of the President

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of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session.

In that connection, it has been proposed that the President at the sixty-ninth regular session, His Excellency Mr. San Kutesa of the Republic of Uganda, be elected by acclamation as President at the twenty-ninth special session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to elect Mr. Sam Kutesa President of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session by acclamation?

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, and I invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Kutesa took the Chair.

Statement by Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session

The President: Twenty years ago, at the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, our Governments affirmed that population was not about numbers. It is about people. They reached consensus on the Programme of Action, that it was to transform the quality of life for all, to expand human choices and to achieve economic growth and sustainable development.

Today we recall and reaffirm the historic goals and objectives of the 1994 Cairo Conference so as to better prepare for the future we want — a future where people can realize their aspirations, where their human rights are respected and their well-being and dignity are supported and our environment is protected for this generation and for generations to come.

This special session marks the culmination of the 20-year review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and is an occasion to consider its follow-up beyond 2014.

The results of the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review show that our countries have made considerable progress in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action during the past two decades. It is impossible to speak of that progress without acknowledging the leadership provided by Governments and the contributions of civil society, including religious communities, youth

groups, women's organizations and many others. We must also recognize the decisions of parents to educate their children, especially girls, about the full and effective enjoyment of all their human rights and to foster an environment of equality between their sons and daughters so that they can reach their highest potential and live in dignity, free from violence and discrimination.

Therefore, in recognition of the progress made — lives transformed and saved — we can celebrate our collective efforts. Let me take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Population Fund for its important support for national efforts and for the implementation of the Cairo agenda.

But the agenda that began with national surveys and included regional and ministerial conferences and the global intergovernmental meeting in April this year does not end today. The remarkable progress the world has seen since the historic Conference and the summits of the 1990s and the 2000 Millennium Summit still falls short of our ambitions and needs. A lot more must be done to improve the quality of life of all our peoples. It is therefore essential to address with urgency the findings of the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review, which show that despite significant gains in poverty eradication and economic growth since the International Conference on Population and Development, many people have been left behind — their basic needs unmet, their human rights unfulfilled and their potential unrealized.

Poverty, discrimination and income and wealth inequality threaten economic growth and the well-being of individuals, societies and our planet. Those common challenges are relevant to the discussions at tomorrow's Climate Summit 2014 and at the general debate that follows, and they should be addressed in the post-2015 development agenda.

The *ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report* concludes that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity, across sectors and throughout the life course, is the foundation of sustainable development. The Review's findings have significant implications for development policy. We urgently have to address rising wealth and income inequities, unfulfilled gender equality and the empowerment of women, gender-based violence and discrimination, the need for lifelong learning and investment in building young people's capabilities, inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health care services, and strengthening health systems. Similarly, increasingly

diverse household structures and living arrangements require that we plan and build sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages. The impact of population dynamics is so important that we need to better integrate it into development planning at the national, regional and international levels.

The development challenges before us require a coordinated, systematic response through greater cooperation, partnership and global leadership, which I intend to promote further as President of the General Assembly. We must build on lessons learned and maintain the momentum. Together with the Millennium Development Goals, the ICPD agenda helps pave the way for the post-2015 development agenda and the achievement of sustainable development.

This special session provides the international community with a crucial and timely opportunity to share ideas and reinforce its commitment to improving the lives of people, fostering equality and dignity and ensuring sustained, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Let us commit ourselves to stronger action, guided by the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review, to fully implement the Cairo agenda on population and development. I look forward to participants' statements sharing their Governments' visions for the implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I wish to welcome everyone to this important special session. I wish to thank all those who have supported it. I applaud the Commission on Population and Development for its leadership. I commend Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, especially its Population Division, whose authoritative studies are globally renowned.

Today we mark 20 years since the successful holding of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Conference was a global turning point. Its Programme of Action was built on fundamental principles affirming that development should be centred on people. It emphasized the value of investing in women and girls, and it affirmed the importance of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. The world agreed in Cairo that when women and girls get the education they deserve, societies are more productive. When their rights are

protected, societies are more just. And when they are empowered to determine their own future, societies become stronger.

(spoke in French)

Twenty years on, those wise principles still guide our actions. In the space of two decades, almost 1 billion people have escaped poverty. Maternal mortality has fallen by almost 50 per cent. We have made progress on gender equality, particularly in reaching parity in primary education for boys and girls. More women are able to choose the number of children they will have and when they will have them. More laws enable a greater number of people to exercise the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations.

(spoke in English)

The Cairo Programme of Action has made a meaningful difference in people's lives — people like 15-year-old Zeinabou of the Niger, who was married to a violent older man. With the help of the United Nations, she now advocates ending child marriage; people like Fajra, a mother in Tunisia, who had to drop out of school when she was just eight but, with United Nations help, Fajra's daughter has graduated from university; and people like 25-year-old Marsa, who had to give birth in a displacement camp in South Sudan. She bled uncontrollably in labour but was saved by a midwife who had learned life-saving skills through a programme supported by the United Nations Population Fund. And there are also people like Lina, a mother in the Philippines, who said so clearly what all of us know is true: "A woman should have the right to choose how many children she wants. It is a basic human right".

I applaud the United Nations Population Fund for leading our global push to translate the Cairo Programme of Action into meaningful change for so many people. I commend its Executive Director, Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin, for his strong leadership. Many of those here have helped to advance global progress, and I salute their advocacy and activities. And I ask them to do even more.

Millions of people still suffer from hunger and poverty and die from preventable causes. They cannot meet basic needs, find meaningful work or access health and education services. Millions still cannot enjoy their basic rights. While we have seen the rise of the global middle class, it has come with inequalities within and among countries. Since 1994,

only limited improvements have been made in the lives of the estimated 1 billion people living in the poorest countries. Their life expectancies continue to be unacceptably low.

As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Cairo Conference and look ahead to the future, we cannot afford to short-change development. That is why we are addressing three overarching challenges. First, we are intensifying efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the 2015 deadline. Secondly, we are defining a bold and ambitious post-2015 development agenda that sets the world on a path to inclusive, sustainable development. Thirdly, we are working to deliver a meaningful climate-change agreement before the end of next year. Tomorrow's Climate Summit should generate strong political will, with bold announcements.

As we advance on all three fronts, we have to remember the vision of Cairo, especially the priority it placed on reproductive health. We must confront the fact that some 800 women still die every day from causes related to pregnancy or childbirth. An estimated 8.7 million young women in developing countries resort to unsafe abortions every year. They urgently need our protection. We must also be guided by the wisdom of the Cairo Conference as we confront major demographic trends, including urbanization, migration, population ageing and the largest generation of young people in history.

We must renew our pledge to protect people, especially women and girls, as we strive to eradicate extreme poverty, protect the rights and dignity of all people and secure the future of our planet for future generations. Today we look back with pride over the past 20 years and look ahead with resolve to achieve much greater progress for the generations to come.

The President: In accordance with resolution 67/250, I now give the floor to Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

Mr. Osotimehin: I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for his opening remarks and for giving me the opportunity to address the Assembly on this special occasion. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his unwavering support for the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the

2014 ICPD Review, and for his report on the Review (A/69/62).

Many have helped us reach this auspicious moment. I would like to thank the Governments represented here for their commitment and support, and for the progress we have made in to improve people's lives in those countries. As in Cairo, civil society has been critical to the success of the ICPD Review, and I want to express our gratitude for its dedication and support.

In 1992, the world rallied around the concept of sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro. Central to that concept was the principle that human beings are at the centre of concerns about sustainable development. In Cairo, just two years later, the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action defined that principle in real terms and forever changed how we perceive population and development. It shifted the focus from human numbers to human lives, human well-being and human rights. Cairo ensured that a bedrock principle of development would be to realize dignity and human rights for all people as a means of achieving our collective goals.

Over the past 20 years, we have seen the rise of hundreds of millions out of poverty, gender parity in primary education, fewer women dying when giving life and more women in the workforce. Those advances show how powerful development founded on dignity and human rights can be. But we still have a long way to go.

Our world is growing increasingly unequal, and all too often women and girls get the short end of the stick. The pace of climate change and environmental degradation shows that we cannot sustain a system in which those at the top continue to consume more and more of our finite resources. Until we can deliver for all people equitably and enable all people to reach their potential, we cannot achieve sustainable development.

The right to health is incontrovertible. The Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on the importance of ensuring the highest sustainable standard of health for all. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are universal human rights. They are also central to sustainability, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

But for many, the right to sexual and reproductive health is still not a reality — not for the 10-year old child bride forced to marry a 62-year old man and bear him children before her mind and body are ready. Not for the single adult who, lacking information and services to prevent an unwanted pregnancy, resorts to an unsafe abortion. Not for the poor rural woman facing a difficult birth without a skilled attendant and far from the nearest health facility. Not for the tens of thousands of young people who lack the means and the knowledge to protect themselves from HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. Not for those affected by crises and conflicts, which often put women and girls at the risk of sexual violence and limit their access to safe spaces, services and support. The consequences can be a death sentence: 800 women die every day from pregnancy-related causes, many of them single adults. For every maternal death, 20 more women and girls end up with preventable complications, including obstetric fistula.

Whether a woman is rich or poor should not determine whether she lives or dies. To achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health and to ensure reproductive rights for all, we must bolster fragile health systems so that we can reach women and girls with the services and commodities they need when they need them and where they live. It is simply unacceptable that today more than 200 million women who want family planning cannot obtain it.

Since Cairo we have made substantial progress in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Yet in no part of the world is gender equality fully realized, and in some places existing gains are being rolled back. More women are in the workplace, but often in vulnerable and informal employment. Women continue to be underrepresented in positions of power and decision-making. Gender parity in secondary and tertiary education is yet to be achieved. One out of every three women in the world, in every country and from every background, will experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. Too many are not safe at school, not safe fetching water, not safe on a university campus, not safe even on the steps of a courthouse or in their own homes.

Discrimination and harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation persist and the perpetrators operate with impunity, even in the face of laws against such practices. Each day's news brings that reality home to us in vivid

detail — another brutal gang rape, another battered woman, another girl dead from an utterly honourless killing, another young person lost to an unsafe abortion or to AIDS, another school empty. Sexual violence occurs on an epic scale and is sometimes used as a weapon of war, a tactic of terror.

Is there a tipping point, when we will finally say “enough” to violence and discrimination against women and girls? When will we finally bring back our girls — all our girls and women — to school and to the workforce, to their rightful place alongside men and boys at the table where decisions are made? When will we get them away from child marriage, away from early pregnancy, away from HIV infection, away from the violence and harmful practices that strip them of their dignity and in the worst cases deprive them of their lives?

Only then will we be able to build the future that all of us want. We cannot advance by leaving half of the population — our women and girls — behind.

We now have the largest generation of young people the world has ever known or seen. There can be no talk of sustainable development without adequate investment in their health, education and employment, without empowering them and equipping them with skills, the ability to act, and resilience.

Declining fertility rates are providing low- and middle-income countries with a window of opportunity to realize a demographic dividend, yet many young people are excluded from development efforts. Today 40 per cent of the world's unemployed are young people, and 60 per cent of all young people in developing regions are without work, are not studying, or are engaged in irregular employment.

What little data we have on the state of young people's sexual and reproductive health and access to services and information show major concerns. Over 8.7 million unsafe abortions occurred among those between 15 and 24 years of age in developing countries — and that in 2008 alone — and 41 per cent of all new HIV infections occurred in that same age group in 2009. Indeed, the new infections we see in HIV occur more among single adults than in any other group.

Those here in the Assembly hold the future of the world's young people in their hands. Invest in them, because they hold the world's future in theirs.

We also need to ensure that older persons have access to social protection systems, health care and lifelong learning opportunities. As our societies age, we can reap a second demographic dividend by providing opportunities to older people to live their lives to the fullest. We now say that “70 is the new 40”; we therefore need to engage with and utilize them effectively.

This morning the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples opened in this Hall. The United Nations Population Fund will continue to work closely with Member States to help them meet the commitments they made to their indigenous populations during the regional ICPD review conferences so that they, like everyone else, will enjoy their full human rights.

Sustainability is about meeting the needs and aspirations of today’s population while planning and making policy for tomorrow’s. In no field is that more evident than in population and development.

We must turn population trends into opportunities — from youth bulge to youth bonus, from urban overload to vibrant, efficient urban centres, from internal displacement and refugee crises to making migration work for development. We can take full advantage of those opportunities by supporting people’s rights and empowerment, by understanding population dynamics as they unfold and by governing effectively and inclusively.

We face perhaps no greater challenge over the long term than climate change. Tomorrow, the Secretary-General will host a Climate Summit to build momentum towards a global agreement and to make the case for action on the ground. The ICPD Beyond 2014 Review shows us that we need to fundamentally change our patterns of consumption, to slow the frenetic waste of natural resources and to enrich prospects for dignity and equality for current and future generations. Investing in universal public services is one of the most effective and just actions Governments can take to create a foundation for equality and resource efficiency.

As the debates and policies on population before the ICPD in 1994 demonstrated, large-scale global fears have too often overshadowed the human rights and freedoms of individuals and communities, and at worst have been used to justify constraints on human rights. The 20-year review of implementation of the ICPD agenda has shown us that we must empower people to determine the course of their lives, to generate the innovations that will address climate change and other

challenges and to devise the policies that will advance us collectively into sustainability. Our predecessors in Cairo understood that when they recognized that people are at the centre of sustainable development.

Over the past 20 years, we have seen the power of people time and again — the power of women able to decide by choice, not chance, whether and when to have children, and how many; the power of young people, equipped with education, skills and opportunities, to contribute to and benefit from development; the power of adolescent girls to challenge the status quo against all odds and to resist early marriage, early motherhood and female genital mutilation and instead embrace education and the opportunities it can bring; the power of men — husbands and fathers — pushing to educate their girls; and the power of older persons in societies that respect and value their contributions.

We cannot talk about sustainable development without ensuring that young people’s needs are met, that we give voice to their aspirations and that we include them in decision-making. We cannot talk about sustainable development without addressing women’s empowerment, gender inequality and discrimination and violence. We cannot talk about sustainable development without ensuring that the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all are met. Those issues must be at the heart of the post-2015 agenda to ensure that current and future generations are made up of resilient, adaptive, innovative and creative people capable of building resilient societies. If we can do that, we will be able to address any challenge that our world faces today and tomorrow.

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Organization of the session

The President: In order to expedite the work of the twenty-ninth special session and in accordance with previous precedents, it is proposed that the Vice-Presidents of the twenty-ninth special session shall be the same as those of the Assembly’s sixty-ninth regular session.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: Likewise, it is proposed that the Chairpersons of the Main Committees of the sixty-

ninth regular session shall serve in the same capacity at the twenty-ninth special session.

May I take it that the Assembly also agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee of the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly is thus fully constituted.

I should like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the Holy See and the State of Palestine, in their capacities as Observer States, in the work of the General Assembly. The observer of the Holy See will participate in the work of the twenty-ninth special session in accordance with resolution 58/314, of 1 July 2004, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to the intervention. The observer of the State of Palestine will participate in the work of the twenty-ninth special session in accordance with resolution 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, resolution 43/177, of 15 December 1988, resolution 52/250, of 7 July 1998, and resolution 67/19, of 29 November 2012, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to their intervention.

In accordance with resolution 67/250, States members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations that are not Members of the United Nations may participate in the work of the twenty-ninth special session as observers. Also in accordance with resolution 67/250, the plenary meetings shall feature statements by five selected representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, chosen by the President of the General Assembly.

I should now like to seek the cooperation of special session on the length of statements. Given the short duration of the special session and in order to hear all the speakers inscribed on the list, it would be appreciated if representatives would keep their statements in the debate as brief as possible, preferably not to exceed three minutes. I strongly encourage speakers to adhere to this time limit.

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The provisional agenda of the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly is contained in document A/S-29/1. In order to expedite

its work, the Assembly may wish to consider the provisional agenda directly in plenary meeting without referring it to the General Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to this procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as it appears in document A/S-29/1?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7

Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

First, we want to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session.

Twenty years ago, the world met in Cairo and agreed by consensus on a Programme of Action that integrated a comprehensive range of population, social, development and human rights issues that are necessary in order to ensure that each person lives a healthy and dignified life.

Poverty is an affront to human dignity, and its eradication is the greatest global challenge facing the world today. The Group of 77 and China recognizes that the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) prompted the international community to tackle poverty through concrete actions. Despite the progress achieved, the fight against poverty is now facing serious constraints arising from the global financial and economic crises, continuing food insecurity, volatile capital flows, the extreme volatility of commodity prices, limited access to energy and the problems posed by climate change. In those circumstances, it is critical to support developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty and inequality.

The ICPD Programme of Action set the tone for the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs). Although considerable progress has been made, the Group is concerned about the inequality and gaps in achieving the MDGs and the vast socioeconomic and environmental challenges facing developing countries. We therefore call on developed countries to fulfil their official development assistance commitments and other international cooperation commitments, taking into account the fact that developing countries will require new, additional and sustainable financial resources to implement a wide range of development activities.

Financial assistance should always be made available without conditions, since development strategies should be country-led and should take into account only the conditions, needs and priorities of developing countries themselves. It should also be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, with North-South cooperation as the essential element, and South-South and triangular cooperation as useful complements.

A few days ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/304, aimed at establishing a multilateral legal framework for the processes aimed at restructuring sovereign debt. That historic achievement brings hope to developing countries that want to restructure their debt based on their actual ability to pay. The aim is to promote economic growth and development, as well as to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action.

Looking ahead, the Group of 77 and China commits to taking a leading role in shaping the post-2015 development agenda, and stresses that poverty eradication must remain the central overarching objective. We must be able to eradicate poverty by 2030.

As we reflect on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014, the Group of 77 and China emphasizes that population issues must continue to be addressed in a comprehensive manner and that they must be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. The interrelationships between population, resources, environment and development should be fully recognized and be properly managed, and should be brought into harmonious and dynamic balance.

The gender perspective should also guide our decisions and actions. Maternal mortality has substantially declined in some regions with developing countries. Nonetheless, women in other such regions face a higher risk of dying as a result of pregnancy and childbirth. That maternal mortality includes a

growing number of girls and adolescent mothers. The number of new HIV infections has declined worldwide. Unfortunately, in some least-developed countries, HIV prevalence has almost doubled since 2001, and two thirds of the people living with HIV in some areas are women.

The Group recalls the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288), which reaffirmed the vital role of women and the need to ensure full opportunities for their equal participation and leadership in all aspects of sustainable development. The international community decided to accelerate the implementation of its commitments in that regard. That key idea was contained in the ICPD Programme of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Women's Action Agenda 21, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). In that context, we also recall our goal to eliminate all harmful practices against all women and girls, such as early forced child marriage and female genital mutilation.

The Group recognizes that everyone should have access, without discrimination, to a set of basic medical services including prevention, cure and rehabilitation, as well as counselling services and essential, safe, affordable, effective and quality medicines. A fully functional, quality and efficient health system with universal coverage is essential.

We call upon developed countries and the relevant international organizations to provide adequate financial resources and technology to developing countries, which should complement the efforts of the developing countries to provide universal health coverage and basic health services for all.

The Group believes that the nexus between migration and development must be addressed comprehensively, mindful of the economic, social and environmental dimensions. It should also include a cultural and human perspective, recognizing the roles and responsibilities of the countries of origin, transit and destination in effectively promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants and their families, especially those of women and children, regardless of their immigration status.

We are exploring the possibility of a legally binding agreement on migration and development in order to

improve the governance of international migration and to protect and promote the human rights of migrants and their contribution to development, regardless of their migration status.

In conclusion, the international community and the States Members and observers of the United Nations must renew their commitment to the principles and purposes of the Programme of Action, assess their performance to date and step up efforts. Donors, United Nations bodies and other international organizations are called on to enhance their financial and technical support to developing countries.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda.

President Museveni: I would like to start by thanking all States Members of the United Nations for the confidence and support that they have accorded to Uganda by electing the former Ugandan Foreign Minister, The Honourable Sam Kutesa, as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I congratulate President Kutesa on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly, at a time when the world is focusing on the transformative post-2015 development agenda.

In Uganda we see this meeting as a great opportunity to share Uganda's achievements and challenges with regard to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the ICPD beyond 2014, as well as the post-2015 development agenda. Since the early 1990s, Uganda has registered a number of achievements in our efforts to improve the socioeconomic well-being of our people. Let me give a few examples.

We have reduced the proportion of the population below the poverty line from 56 per cent in 1992 to 19.5 per cent in 2013. That has led to considerable improvements in the socioeconomic welfare of our people. The campaign against the HIV/AIDS epidemic has resulted in a remarkable reduction in the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection and transmission, from the high rate of 18 per cent in the 1990s to the current level of 7.3 per cent. I am happy to note that we ensure that all newly eligible people living with HIV are enrolled in antiretroviral treatment.

We have affirmative action for women embedded in our Constitution, which provides that 30 per cent of all elected positions should be reserved for women.

We have also invested heavily in universal primary education. That has enabled us to increase the school enrolment rate from 2.4 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. We have also improved the quality of education.

There have also been improvements in the collection and utilization of population data. My Government has just concluded the national population census for 2014, which provides up-to-date data for planning. Our Government prioritizes the health of women and children. In that regard, our Government has increased its investment in family planning and reproductive health. As a result, we have witnessed an increasing number of women using voluntary family planning. As a result of pro-poor policies, Uganda has witnessed a consistent and steady rise in life expectancy, from 42 years in 1990 to 55 years currently.

Like many developing countries, Uganda has a youthful population, which constitutes about 78 per cent of the entire population. Our Government recognizes that a young population, if healthy and educated with skills for available jobs, can be a very effective engine for economic growth. In that regard, on 28 June, we launched a multisectoral blueprint for Uganda so that we can benefit from the demographic dividend resulting from the surge of young people in Uganda. Our Government will continue to work tirelessly to increase wealth, reduce income inequalities and enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Government is fully aware of the need to ensure the protection of the environment, as well as to deal with climate change.

Uganda reaffirms its support for the full implementation of the historic ICPD Programme of Action. We note the useful recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (see A/69/62, annex), which we will consider in the context of our national laws and policies.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to commend the important work that the United Nations Population Fund is undertaking aimed at improving the quality of life of the people of the world under the leadership of our friend, Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile.

President Bachelet Jeria (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my gratitude for this invitation, and in particular to acknowledge the work and the leadership of Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin, who has achieved global recognition in the discussion of population and development.

Today, our gathering has been prompted by the need to review the goals set in Cairo in 1994, with the aim of establishing consistent guidelines, given the new international challenges, and of ensuring equitable development and the provision of opportunities for our population.

We know that there are a great number of outstanding issues. We cannot forget that still today, 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty, 842 million people suffer from malnutrition and 99 million children under 5 years old are undernourished and underweight for their age.

It is impossible to achieve the development of the world's population if 2.5 billion people — that is, more than one third of the world's inhabitants — lack access to adequate sanitation and 748 million people have to use water sources that have not been appropriately treated.

One lesson we have learned from implementing the Programme of Action since 1994 is that Governments cannot implement their objectives in a selective or sectoral manner. It is our duty to take on that challenge and come up with a new agenda that can be applied in an integrated, comprehensive manner that accords with each country's reality. In that regard, Chile wholeheartedly welcomes the issuance of the Secretary-General's report on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and development beyond 2014 (A/69/62). We will undertake to ensure the necessary political emphasis on the five thematic pillars of population and development — dignity and human rights, health, sustainability, governance and accountability, and place and mobility.

We endorse the principle that every individual should live in a social environment that provides stability and physical and psychological well-being, in which rights are guaranteed by the State. Everyone should have the opportunity to use their abilities by participating in society without fear or discrimination.

Concerning the first pillar — dignity and human rights — an international culture of respect for human

rights has been achieved with the support and oversight of such international bodies as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Criminal Court. Those are important gains, but armed conflicts, terrorism, authoritarian regimes, violations of women's rights and, finally, discrimination and injustice pose constant threats that demand that we step up our efforts in prevention, education and control.

With regard to new health issues, both health and social protection systems must be equal to the profound changes that people are experiencing around the world. The World Health Organization has estimated that in 2050 the number of people over the age of 60 will be twice what it was in 2000, which will unquestionably present us with far-reaching challenges.

As for sustainability, economic activity must incorporate a responsible attitude with regard to its impacts on climate change. New forms of management and administration must be devised for our energy, water and marine resources, and science can play an important role if we broaden our collaboration and encourage partnerships for fostering innovation. But it is crucial that every international actor make specific and measurable commitments to ensure that we also have accountability.

That brings us to the fourth pillar of our post-2014 agenda — governance and accountability, which citizens all over the world are demanding ever more insistently. Strengthening the capacity of citizens to hold their Governments to account is fundamental if we are to provide a more timely response to the demands of our peoples and citizens.

The mobility of populations, the last pillar, is another clear example of the need for coordination among States. Today Chile is seeing a new reality of growing migration. It is our firm belief that international migration is a positive factor in countries' development, both economically and through dialogue among cultures and peoples. Based on the situation in our country and in South America as a whole, we propose that the challenges be tackled in a holistic manner and that all migrants should be considered as subjects of law. We would like to promote an international convention on migration that would establish minimum standards for the mobility of individuals and enhance their contribution to development. We should never forget that, as the Secretary-General pointed out,

development is the expansion of the opportunities and freedoms of persons.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad.

President Deby Itno (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate and thank my brother the newly elected President of the General Assembly for his guidance of our work.

My country, Chad, is honoured to be invited to this special session, the culmination of an exciting process lasting several months at the national, subregional and continental levels. I would like to express my country's gratitude to the United Nations Population Fund for its support in the various processes to evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Chad.

Twenty years ago, we took to heart the solemn commitment to work to ensure that our populations had universal access to reproductive health services, to defend the fundamental human rights of persons, lighten the burden of poverty, guarantee gender equality, prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and protect the environment. Now we are taking stock.

Like most of the countries that signed the historic Cairo consensus, Chad has made considerable progress in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action. We can point, *inter alia*, to the consolidation of democracy, a drop in the poverty rate of 8.3 per cent between 2003 and 2011, the implementation of a plan to protect the environment, and the adoption and implementation of various strategies geared to children and adolescents. We are strengthening legal, political and strategic initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. We are implementing a number of measures in the areas of reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and the fight against violence against women and are strengthening children's education, particularly for girls, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

As is clear, we have worked to make our legal environment more favourable to human rights at every level of society in our nation. We have made substantial progress in providing access for young people to education and health services and in the areas of protecting girls and empowering women. Thanks to our

2002 law promoting maternal health, access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and couples is no longer restricted in any way. The Government of Chad has regularly increased the budget for both those social sectors, education and health. The allocation for those areas for 2014 represents 13 per cent of the State's budget, and we plan to increase that to 15 per cent for 2015.

As I have said, we should acknowledge and recognize what my country has achieved so far, but unfortunately we have achieved only part of what we set out to do in 1994. Maternal mortality is still an untenable tragedy in many of our communities, and our women and girls too often still lose their babies in childbirth. Nor are our youth completely protected from the ravages of sexually transmitted diseases or HIV. We have not yet achieved the goal of full employment. Too many of our girls are still the target of unacceptable violence in our villages and towns.

Those difficult observations, made very responsibly by the various Government entities and civil society organizations in Chad, led us to the common position we expressed in the declaration adopted last January following the African Union summit on the future of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014. In that declaration, which was issued in Addis Ababa, we reiterated our commitment to continuing our efforts over the coming decades to ensure dignity, equality and better access to health services for our populations, including in terms of reproductive health and family planning, through international cooperation and strengthened partnerships.

We are particularly pleased to note that our views are pertinent and perfectly in line with the conclusions and recommendations of the global survey, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62) entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014".

I would therefore like to state that the Government and people of Chad fully adhere to the new framework for action on the ICPD beyond 2014 and sincerely hope that its very pertinent concerns will also be reflected and included in the post-2015 development agenda.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Energy, Minister for National Security, Public Administration,

Disaster Management, Home Affairs, Information and Implementation of Grenada.

Mr. Mitchell (Grenada): I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and the people of Grenada, to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62) entitled “ Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014”, and the report on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development.

We are pleased to have contributed to the global survey of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014 and note that we have made considerable progress in implementing the Programme of Action.

We are, however, aware of the challenges that still remain in order to improve the quality of the lives of all our people, to ensure equality and equity and to protect the environment for succeeding generations. We therefore share the urgency of the findings of the review, which show that, despite significant gains in poverty reduction and economic growth since the Conference, many countries and persons have been left behind. Many people lack the fulfilment of basic needs, are without meaningful work or are without access to social protection or public services in health or education. In addition, many people still experience significant barriers to their enjoyment of basic human rights. These issues, and the conclusion that the current state of income and wealth inequality is unsustainable and threatens future economic growth, the cohesion and security of societies and the capacity of people to adapt and innovate in response to changing environmental conditions, are relevant to the discussions that will take place during the Climate Summit tomorrow and the general debate that follows.

We note that the report addresses in a comprehensive manner ways to enhance individual capabilities and resilience and ensure sustainable development for all. We are pleased to see that human rights and equality define the analytical approach in the report. We share the conclusion of the report that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity across the multiple sectors covered by the ICPD and throughout a person’s life course is indeed the foundation of sustainable development.

Increasing inequalities of wealth and income, unfulfilled gender equality and the need to empower women, the need for lifelong learning and the building of human capabilities, especially for young people, and the need to address inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services, including through strengthening health systems in both rural and urban areas — all these have significant implications for development policies.

Increasingly diverse household structures and living arrangements require us to plan and build sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages. The impact of population dynamics at the micro- and macro-levels also requires the integration of population dynamics into development and planning at the national, regional and international levels.

We agree that the development challenges that we face require the systematic participation of all stakeholders in crafting responses to the challenges I mentioned earlier. That requires partnership, and global leadership throughout the United Nations. In that regard, Grenada is pleased to reiterate the support we expressed in the context of the regional review of the implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014, where we joined in the adoption of the regional plan of action for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We are therefore fully committed to the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, which needs to take into account the outcome of our regional review and the findings and recommendations of the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review. We therefore call for the inclusion of the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General’s report (A/69/62) and the regional review outcomes in the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, my country is proud to join the international community in reaffirming its support for the historic ICPD Programme of Action as well as for the transformational vision presented in the Secretary-General’s report.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): Twenty years ago, in 1994, when the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) met in Cairo, Member States agreed on a Programme of Action that,

it was claimed, would quicken the pace of development and secure a better future for generations yet to come. But, two decades later, the results have not been nearly as successful as expected. Underdevelopment and poverty continue to plague many developing States.

A global economic crisis in 2008 — not emanating from the poor, but generated by the rich — sent the economic system into a tailspin, and its effects permeated most developing countries, the Caribbean subregion principally among them. Its most devastating impact was to return many States and peoples to pre-1994 conditions. The current state of wealth and income inequality between wealthy States and poor ones, and even between the wealthy and the poor within States, is justly described by the 12 February 2014 report (A/69/62) as “unsustainable”. Too many of the Earth’s inhabitants have been left behind, and too many of the youth and the elderly have been left out. In my own Caribbean region, the problem is not population growth, but the refusal of international financial institutions to grant us the concessional financing that we urgently require to produce conditions that would create jobs for our small populations. The problem also lies in the rejection of debt forgiveness, or at least meaningful debt rescheduling, which would give us a chance to recover the development ground that we have lost.

Unemployment is the most severe of the many challenges that all societies face. Youth unemployment is the most frightening. It destroys our human capital, our most precious human resource. It condemns young people, capable of innovation and creativity, to lives on the margins of society or to lives of crime and violence. The nuclear family — the basis of all civilizations — is placed under great stress as young couples are squeezed out of housing markets, cannot obtain mortgages or credit and even lose faith in the future. Is it any wonder that across the global landscape there is youth discontent and frustration with governance? And it should be said and noted, with all due seriousness, that when small States like mine venture into areas of productivity, such as financial services, which challenge the dominance of some developed countries, the response is to bludgeon us with threats and blacklisting so that we either surrender or perish. The principal victims are the highly qualified young people who we have spent millions of dollars to train so that they could compete in a globalized world.

But our economies as a whole also suffer, leaving us unable to provide adequately for the health care

of our sick and elderly or to guard our population against non-communicable diseases. At the present time, chikungunya is spreading across the Caribbean subregion, with severe consequences for economies. We now live in trepidation of the spread of the Ebola virus, for the costs to our small countries would go far beyond the huge expense of medical treatment. The effect on tourism, which now accounts on average for 60 per cent of the gross domestic product of many of our countries, would be devastating. Yet the international community has not responded to the disease in parts of West Africa with the urgency for which it cries out.

The world must be grateful for the helpful actions taken by China, Cuba and the United States, but what is needed is a global response. People are dying, people are frightened, people have little or no hope. If the world waits for a global pandemic before we all act together, the effect will set us back even further than the financial crisis of 2008 or the recessions that preceded it. The family of nations must respond with the care and compassion of which the United Nations is capable.

Small countries, such as mine, are anxious to overcome the problem of unemployment of our youth, to guard against threats to our people’s health and to establish the conditions for human happiness and the overall advancement of our people. But while we ourselves are making great efforts to succeed, success will be best achieved if the effort is a global one. That should be why we have all come to the General Assembly today. For what is required is a sustained global effort. And that is what any review of the Programme of Action must reflect. Nothing less will do.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wunna Laung Lwin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Lwin (Myanmar): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session, on the theme “Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014”. My delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and forward-looking report, entitled “Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014” (A/69/62). We also thank the Secretariat for providing us with the index report (A/69/122) on the

interactive debate at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development.

My delegation views the report of the Secretary-General as a good basis for our careful consideration. We are pleased that the report discusses, in a wide-ranging manner, how to enhance individual capabilities and resilience and ensure sustainable development. We note that human rights and equality inform the analytical approach to the report. In that regard, my delegation also wishes to stress the importance of the right to development, adequate health care and quality education for people in developing countries. My delegation shares the view, highlighted in the conclusion of the report, that investing in individual rights and dignity-enhancing capabilities across the multiple sectors of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and throughout a person's life is the foundation of sustainable development.

We wholeheartedly agree that the systematic participation of all stakeholders in crafting responses, as well as partnerships and global leadership, through the United Nations, are of paramount importance in facing development challenges. In that regard, my delegation is pleased to reiterate its support for the regional plans of action for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

At the national level, the Myanmar National Commission on Population and Development has already endorsed the findings of the *ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report*. The ICPD Review recognized the significant progress that Myanmar has achieved in some areas within the ICPD mandate. At the same time, we also recognize our need to exert greater efforts to fill the gaps constraining the achievement of the ICPD and MDG goals. We believe that enhanced cooperation and assistance by our international partners would help us to overcome the setbacks.

I take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, for the first time in over 30 years, Myanmar successfully conducted a nationwide census from 29 March to 10 April with a view to securing up-to-date and basic accurate information on its population and households. The results of the census will help us improve planning, development and the quality of life. In that regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate its gratitude to the United Nations Population Fund and all donor countries for their financial and technical assistance in making the census project a great success.

The initial outcome of the population and housing census reveals that Myanmar's population is 51.42 million. The female population constitutes 26.59 million, whereas the male population is about 24.82 million. As the female population is higher, our national development programmes put greater emphasis on activities for the all-round development of women, as well as children and youth. In addition to population data, the census has also recorded data crucial to the issue of population and development, including age structure, fertility, morbidity and mortality, migration and household size. The successful collection of such data will contribute to our efforts to implement the remaining gaps in the area of population and development and will bring Myanmar closer to reaching the national and international population and development goals.

In concluding, I would like to express Myanmar's reaffirmation of support for the regional review outcomes, whose results should be taken into account in the further implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014 and should be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia.

Mr. Garibashvili (Georgia): This special session is taking place at a time when our world faces a number of critical challenges. We must strengthen our resolve and implement the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which is vital for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and defining our post-2015 agenda.

During the past 20 years, since the adoption of the Programme of Action, my country has made considerable progress in advancing the agenda in several priority areas. Our population agenda has been very successful to date. Fewer women are dying in childbirth, more unwanted pregnancies are being prevented and young people's opportunities have expanded. But much more needs to be done.

My country is working on a host of programmes focused on caring for our population and improving its well-being. Most significantly in the past year, my Government launched its flagship programme on universal health care, which ensures that every citizen of Georgia has a basic package of outpatient, inpatient and emergency health services. Georgia also

has a comprehensive social protection strategy, whose primary focus is on protection against poverty in old age and targeted assistance to poor and vulnerable people. A new public/private solidarity fund will mobilize non-budgetary resources to support the most vulnerable.

In December 2013, the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Subsequently, in January 2014, the Government adopted our new action plan to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. My country has taken several legislative and institutional steps to address human rights challenges, including the adoption of a National Human Rights Strategy for 2014-2020, the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2014-2015, and a new anti-discrimination law.

But another major challenge remains in the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Over 450,000 people in Georgia were displaced during several waves of conflict. Their right to return to their homes of origin remains violated, since they have not been granted the conditions for safe, voluntary, and dignified return. The principal goal of the Government remains to promote the socioeconomic integration and improved living conditions of IDPs until their safe and dignified return is possible. We are implementing various plans to attain that goal.

Despite our remarkable achievements, much remains to be done. We are mindful of the challenges still before us in our efforts to improve the quality of life of all our people, ensure equality and protect the environment for succeeding generations. We therefore share the urgency of the findings of the review. My country is proud to join the international community in reaffirming its support for the ICPD Programme of Action and stands ready to further contribute to that effort.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic.

President Gnassingbé (*spoke in French*): My country, Togo, welcomes the convening of this special session dedicated to the issues raised by 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. Twenty years after the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action, several initiatives have been undertaken, and much effort has been devoted to improving the lives of our people.

However, a number of gaps remain, hindering the implementation of the ICPD goals.

Although some countries have experienced more success than others in certain areas, we should all make an extra effort to improve the implementation of the Programme of Action through capacity-building and an increase in resources devoted to critical development areas. We believe that the Cairo Programme of Action still remains relevant, and the international community must therefore continue to implement it.

Togo has worked hard in most of the areas covered by the Programme of Action, which has allowed us to make significant progress in improving our people's welfare. But the emergence of new challenges arising from unfettered globalization, various financial crises, the negative impact of climate change, new pandemics and rapid population growth has undermined our fragile economy, thus hindering efforts to implement the Programme.

Nevertheless, Togo has allocated the means needed to achieve the ICPD goals. We have established institutional and legal frameworks conducive to economic growth, gender equality and access to sexual and reproductive health. My country's efforts in that regard yielded significant results between 1998 and 2013, including a 17 per cent reduction in the maternal mortality rate; a reduction of over 70 per cent in the infant mortality rate; a halving of the mortality rate for children under 5 years of age; a slight decrease in the fertility index; a significant increase in modern contraceptive prevalence; a significant reduction in the prevalence of HIV; and encouraging results in the eradication of female genital mutilation and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, as is the case in most African countries, Togo's population includes a high proportion of young people, which presents both challenges and opportunities. With regard to the challenges, that category of the population requires enormous investments to meet its needs. At the same time, the vitality of young people is an important asset for any nation. In Togo, the concept of demographic dividend, highlighted in the ICPD review, was quickly noted. Measures have therefore been taken to make judicious use of those energies, in particular through incentives for entrepreneurship, a robust national volunteering programme and support for jobs with a high incidence of manual labour.

We recognize that many challenges still lie ahead in terms of improving maternal health and further reducing neonatal and child mortality. In that vein, we believe that it is only through international cooperation that we will find solutions to the challenges. Our Organization has an important role to play in that respect. I thus welcome the clarity of the Secretary-General's statement on that issue.

My country, Togo, will continue to strive to build capacity and individual resilience and would welcome the support of the international community in achieving sustainable development. We therefore fully endorse the African Union position on the continued implementation of the Programme of Action beyond 2014. I therefore believe that it is also essential to ensure that the sustainable development goals, which are currently being finalized, are consistent with the ICPD commitments. To conclude, I would like to appeal to the entire international community to work harder, in solidarity and with strengthened synergy, in order to achieve more significant results in this new phase of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Panama.

Mrs. De Saint Malo de Alvarado (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is with singular pleasure and excitement that I take the floor at this high-level meeting of the special session devoted to population and development. The Republic of Panama thanks the United Nations, and the United Nations Population Fund in particular, for convening this meeting, which allows us to pause and examine the progress achieved on the commitments made at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. The goals outlined in the ICPD Programme of Action laid out the path guiding national and global work aimed at eradicating poverty and creating more and better opportunities for the peoples of the world. Although 20 years have passed since the meeting in Cairo, we can say with certainty that the Programme of Action remains fully valid.

In 2010, the General Assembly adopted an extension to the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and called for the submission of a comprehensive report containing data and an analysis of the status and development of the global population. The most recent global report reveals that, in the past two decades, millions of

people have been able to overcome poverty, and access to health services and education has significantly expanded. The same report notes, however, that deep inequalities persist and that they disproportionately affect women and girls. Bridging those gaps in order to ensure the full realization of economic and social rights is the challenge facing us today.

In that respect, the Programme of Action beyond 2014 is not simply a need, but an urgent one. This special session will serve to encourage States, Governments and the peoples of the world to work together to solve emerging problems and raise awareness of global population issues. This will involve addressing the existing inequalities among countries and within societies, drawing on genuine political will and international reciprocity, accompanied by a dialogue that takes into account the needs of human beings as both the subjects and the objects of development.

As the Vice President of my country but, first and foremost, as a woman and mother, I call on Member States to be keenly aware of and devote their attention to such issues with a view to giving greater impetus and urgency to the unfinished business of development and closing the remaining gaps in terms of gender equality, education, sexual and reproductive health, and maternal and infant health. The Government of the Republic of Panama views its population policies as a comprehensive process governed by equality and equity, with the participation of vulnerable groups, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people of African descent and the elderly.

Mrs. Baaro (Kiribati), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are keenly aware that development is a matter not just of figures, but of people. Behind the national statistics reflecting a sustained high level of economic growth are hidden deep-rooted inequalities. Whereas in cities, people attend school for an average of nine years, in Panama's indigenous regions, that figure falls to just three. In urban areas, almost all births occur in health facilities with professional assistance, but that rate reaches just 40 per cent in other areas. We know that high rates of maternal and infant mortality persist in rural and indigenous areas owing to a lack of transportation, economic barriers and limited access to health services. On average, one in five pregnant women is below 19 years of age.

Our Administration is committed to changing that situation. Our goal is to translate the high economic

growth that our country has enjoyed in recent years into an inclusive sustainable development campaign aimed at closing the major gaps preventing the full integration of all of our population in the development process. That is why the priorities of my Government include the strengthening of the social protection system, accompanied by a strong investment in human capital, which will allow individuals and citizens to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, thereby realizing their full potential. Such a people-centred approach serves as the basis for policies seeking to expand access to education and cultural activities, primary health care, and drinking water and sanitation for all; to reduce malnutrition; and to generate sustainable sources of income.

Programmes such as the universal fellowship and network of opportunities promote school attendance and staying in school at the national level and encourage demand for basic health services. Initiatives such as Mesoamerica Health 2015 make proactive focused investments aimed at improving access to and the quality of sexual and reproductive health services so as to reduce, in the short and medium term, gaps in family planning services and the rates of maternal and infant mortality in indigenous areas. Our health services are primarily focused on prevention and, for adolescents, on developing user-friendly services. We know that only through a comprehensive approach to population and development dynamics can the Cairo Programme of Action be effective beyond 2015.

Panama reiterates its commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 and to the Montevideo Consensus. As a State Member of the United Nations, Panama fully subscribes to the efforts of the international community to develop policies, strategies and programmes with a view to protecting and promoting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for the prosperity and development of our peoples.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the His Excellency Mr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): On behalf of His Majesty the Ingwenyama King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Indlovukazi the Queen Mother, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland, it gives me great pleasure to be part of this special session of the General

Assembly on the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and to map a way forward for its implementation beyond 2014, following its indefinite extension by the General Assembly. I am confident that, by the end of our deliberations, we will reach a consensus on how best to incorporate the ICPD Programme of Action as an integral part of a transformative post-2015 development agenda.

We have come a long way since the landmark International Conference on Population and Development was held in 1994 in Cairo, Egypt, where 179 nations of the world reached a consensus on a forward-looking Programme of Action, which was to guide the implementation of population programmes for the following 20 years. Indeed, the ICPD Programme of Action, which shifted the focus from the mere attainment of demographic targets to placing people at the centre of development with a strong emphasis on human rights, has been the guiding framework for the development and implementation of population policies and programmes over the past 20 years and shall continue to be in the future.

Since Cairo, the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland has made major strides in putting into place the requisite policy, legal and institutional frameworks that have a direct bearing on population-related outcomes. They include the National Population Policy, the National Gender Policy and the National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights. The policy frameworks are anchored to the ICPD principle that every citizen is entitled to fundamental human rights and freedoms, irrespective of gender, culture, religion, age, race and economic status, as is articulated in our Constitution.

On the legislative front, the Kingdom has enacted the requisite laws, including the Girls and Women Protection Act, the Maintenance Act, the People Trafficking and People Smuggling (Prohibition) Act, and the Children's Protection and Welfare Act. The Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences bill has been drafted and is under review. Most importantly, the country adopted our Constitution in 2005, which enshrines a Bill of Rights.

The strides we have made in terms of putting in place the institutional mechanisms include the establishment of a fully-fledged ministry dedicated to youth affairs, the National Population Unit, the National Gender

and Family Issues Unit, the Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit, the National Youth Council, the National Coordination Children's Unit, and efforts to prevent people trafficking and people smuggling.

At this juncture, I would like to underscore the fact that the Government of Swaziland has taken action, with the support of our development partners, to operationalize these policies through various programmes, targeting, in particular, the most vulnerable members of our society. We are working tirelessly to scale up programmes to meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of all Swazis, including adolescents, and to ensure that they are enabled to exercise the basic right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to be provided with the information and services to do so. An action worth emphasizing, which has been taken to ensure universal access, is the strengthening of the logistics management information system, which has resulted in more efficient distribution of family planning commodities.

The Kingdom of Eswatini or Swaziland has made significant progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The results of the latest national HIV antenatal serosurveillance survey indicate that a drop in HIV prevalence in the 15-19 age group has given a glimmer of hope that the epidemic could be controlled if current interventions are scaled up, including effective culturally based interventions that target adolescents and youth, in particular rites that promote chastity, such as the *Umhlanga* or "reed dance", the *Umcwasho*, which is a public display of abstinence for girls, and the *Lusekwane*, which is a coming of age ceremony for boys.

While the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland is fully committed to ensuring that our endeavours lead to the fulfilment of our national development goals and aspirations, including those related to the ICPD Programme of Action, the results of the national progress review point to gaps in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Those gaps are due to various factors, including the world financial and economic crisis, which has had an adverse impact on the domestic economy and manifests itself in our sluggish annual growth rate and the accompanying fiscal challenges. The volatile food and energy prices, food insecurity and the difficulties posed by climate change have further aggravated the situation. Those adverse developments have continued to curtail the

country's ability to invest in the economic and social sectors. However, the economy is now showing signs of recovery, and better growth is expected in the medium term.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the full commitment of the Government of Swaziland to the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, which is as relevant today as it was when it came into being close to 20 years ago. Our Government will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the gaps that have been noted through the operational review are addressed. However, we are constrained by the lack of resources in the pursuit of that noble goal. Therefore, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, I take this opportunity to appeal to our development partners to commit and honour their pledges towards the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by Her Excellency Mrs. Tarja Halonen, former President of the Republic of Finland.

Mrs. Halonen (Finland): Today, we mark the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, where tireless efforts to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality and to empower women and girls put individuals and human rights at the centre of sustainable development.

The work done in Cairo 20 years ago deserves our respect even today. Progress, as documented by the ICPD review process, has been important. However, it has been uneven. Inequality and multiple forms of discrimination remain crucial barriers for the well-being and health of individuals. Violence against women and girls; discrimination against sexual minorities; child, early and forced marriage; female genital mutilation and cutting; and unsafe abortions are still far too common. Women, the young, the poor and minority groups are particularly affected.

Differences in gender identity and sexual orientation or any other status cannot be a basis for differences in the enjoyment of human rights. If people cannot decide for themselves on their most private matters — sexuality, marriage, children — how could we expect them to be able to take broader responsibility for their communities and the planet?

My country, Finland, greatly values the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Besides our unwavering political support, our material support is reflected in our core contribution to UNFPA — \$58 million dollars in 2014, which is more than we give to any other entity in the United Nations system. We congratulate UNFPA on its increased focus on adolescents, young people, and especially young girls. They need life skills and youth-friendly services, including comprehensive education and information on sexuality.

We need to keep up the momentum created in Cairo, which has led to remarkable improvements in the lives of millions of people. We welcome the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's forward-looking report entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), and the agreements reached at the regional conferences.

We must now move boldly forward with the recommendations of the ICPD review and build effective partnerships to achieve even stronger support for sexual and reproductive health and rights in the post-2015 agenda. My country, Finland, remains strongly committed to that work,

In my capacity as a Chair of the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD, it has been a privilege to be part of a global movement dedicated to advancing human rights, equality and social justice for all. I commend all the Member States and women's, youth and other civil society organizations for their dedication to uphold human rights and freedoms throughout the process. Our common work is not finished until every individual can fully enjoy his or her human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

Mr. Sopoaga (Tuvalu): Tuvalu welcomes the report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62) and the report on the interactive debate at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122).

As we transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the new global development framework of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda, we are always reminded by the Charter of the United Nations that our populations — we the peoples — are important and must be placed at the centre of development. At the same time, as leaders in positions of authority and influence, we must also take charge of facilitating and taking transformational decisions to ensure that the world will be a peaceful and generous one.

The Agenda 21 Programme of Action for Sustainable Development and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development call for a development pathway that recognizes the interrelationships among population, peace and security, quality of economic growth patterns, level of natural resource use and the state of the environment. In pursuing the future we need, we should not compromise on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The global survey of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014 shows that, despite significant gains in poverty reduction and economic growth, many people continue to be marginalized or left behind — particularly the least-developed countries (LDCs) and the small island developing States, such as my own, Tuvalu.

Tuvalu's development is underpinned by the constraints of our fundamental endowments. Those development constraints pose formidable challenges, including the challenge posed by the effects of climate change. We must place those constraints at the centre of our path towards moving forward. Nevertheless, we have been blessed with the strong support of partnerships from the international community, to whom we are ever so grateful, particularly the support and partnerships derived from the United Nations Population Fund office in Suva, Fiji, which covers many of the small island developing States in the Pacific.

Controlling net population growth is a priority for Tuvalu, given our small size. We devote greater attention to population dynamics and trends. However, in partnership with our health care agencies, including both Government and non-governmental organizations, the Government of Tuvalu is committed to promoting the utilization of family planning services and other services vital to ensuring the health of our people, particularly women.

On Funafuti, we are feeling the pressures of urbanization. Already over 57 per cent of the whole population of Tuvalu is now concentrated in the capital island of Funafuti. The main issues for the youth of Tuvalu are the scarcity of employment opportunities and the limited private sector and entrepreneurial prospects. The Government will continue to train its youth in vocational and technical fields, particularly in seafaring and seamanship, a field where Tuvaluans have greatly benefited from job opportunities on overseas ships. Recently seafaring opportunities have been greatly affected by the global financial crisis and the lack of job opportunities in the world market.

Tuvalu agrees with the focus on improving the quality of education. We share the strong belief that education is key to ensuring balanced development. The Government of Tuvalu has recently introduced what we call “The sky is the limit” scholarship policy to allow young Tuvaluans opportunities to further their education to the highest possible level possible.

In the area of gender, women now take part in full-time employment positions in both Government and the private sector. The Government is committed to supporting further progress for women. Under the Family Domestic Violence bill, the Police Powers Act of 2009 and the national gender policy, the Government of Tuvalu has a zero tolerance policy towards violence against women. As a society with strong traditional and cultural values, we strongly emphasize the importance of family culture, as the family unit is crucial to ensuring further advances in population and development in Tuvalu.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) pose a serious challenge to development in Tuvalu. About 70 per cent of all deaths in the Pacific, including in Tuvalu, are caused by NCDs that are fueled by risk factors such as tobacco use and other unhealthy behaviour. The Tuvalu Government is committed to combating those challenges via the health sector and to working together with its partners under the Pacific region NCD road map in order to further address those challenges.

Climate change and its adverse effects threaten the lives and the very survival of the people of Tuvalu and many millions more around the world. The solution to the challenge is beyond the capacity of any single nation. To cope with the problem requires collective global action and sector-wide strategies. We must urgently address climate change in a legal and forward-looking manner, otherwise our ICPD Programme of Action, our

SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, however well formulated they may be, will prove meaningless. Many more will be left behind.

Tomorrow, at the Secretary-General’s Climate Change Summit, we will again be provided with a golden opportunity to add the “walk” to the many talks we have participated in on climate change. We should offer bold action to curb greenhouse gas emissions and to help the most vulnerable to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Tuvalu again reaffirms its commitment to a forward-looking agenda for the ICPD beyond 2014 and to mainstreaming those issues in the post-2015 development agenda. But, as an LDC and a small island developing State and as advocated in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action, there is a strong need for long and meaningful partnerships and support, particularly in the area of funding and capacity-building, in order to be able to deliver and make a difference on the way forward, particularly on the ground, for the communities, the local authorities and the people — especially women and children.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Prosper Bazombanza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Bazombanza (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to convey to the President fraternal greetings from His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to congratulate him on his excellent conduct of our session.

Burundi welcomes the Secretary-General’s reports on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (A/69/62) and the index report on the interactive debate at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122).

Burundi is pleased to have contributed to the global survey reviewing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and we welcome the considerable progress that has been made in its implementation. The Government of Burundi wishes to provide the following information to illustrate that point.

In the sphere of dignity and human rights, the Government of Burundi shares the vision of the

Secretary-General, who states that the eradication of extreme poverty, the elimination of discrimination and of violations of human rights, and social inclusion are central to the achievement of dignity and human rights for all. Burundi will continue to promote and protect the rights of young people to have access to quality education at all levels, taking into account the young people who have left school, while ensuring retention of girls and boys in primary and secondary school, as well as at higher levels of education. Burundi now has a national gender policy, and a specific law on prevention and protection and prosecution of gender-based violations is in the process of being adopted.

In discussing human rights, I must also highlight the significant progress already made by the Government of Burundi in promoting and protecting the rights of the Batwa. The Batwa are well represented in major State institutions, such as the National Assembly, the Senate, the National Committee on Land and Other Assets, the General State Inspectorate and the Assembly of the East African Community.

With regard to health in general and sexual and reproductive health in particular, important progress has been made. For example, there has been a reduction in maternal mortality, which dropped from 910 per 100,000 live births in 2005 to 500 per 100,000 live births in 2010. That was due, *inter alia*, to the policy of free care for pregnant women and women who give birth — an initiative of President Nkurunziza — and also to increased access to modern contraception. The percentage of births aided by trained personnel increased from 22.9 per cent in 2005 to 74.2 per cent in 2013, and the contraceptive prevalence rate rose from 8.4 per cent in 2005 to 30.8 per cent in 2013. The promotion of universal access to sexual and reproductive health for young people and adolescents has been significantly improved by integrating sex education in the basic curricula in the schools and establishing an innovative approach with community-based social networks that provide sexual and reproductive health services to young people.

Turning to population and development, the Government adopted a declaration on the national demographic policy and has taken into account the demographic dynamics in national and local development planning. We have a model called RAPID, which shows how and why the country should use the demographic dividend for sustainable and inclusive development. I take this opportunity to make a strong

appeal to Burundi's partners to redouble their efforts to provide technical and financial resources to ensure universal and equitable access to quality health care, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health care and rights with regard to reproduction and family planning.

The Government of Burundi therefore agrees with the conclusions of the review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, which show that despite significant progress in reducing poverty and in economic growth, there are still shortcomings in meeting basic needs, decent jobs, social protection, public health and education, and many people still face serious obstacles to the enjoyment of their human rights.

The Government of Burundi notes that the report of the Secretary-General comprehensively addresses ways to strengthen individual capacities and resilience to ensure sustainable development. Burundi agrees with the conclusion in the report that investing in individual rights and capabilities and dignity, in various sectors and throughout a person's life, is the foundation of sustainable development.

In the coming years, Burundi must develop, strengthen and pass appropriate national laws, policies and programmes that guarantee and protect human rights, dignity and equality with a view to achieving inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in all sectors. We need to harmonize national laws with international instruments that we have ratified, and speed up implementation of national, regional and international commitments relating to equality between men and women.

Specifically, we need to speed up progress to achieve universal access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services and the enjoyment of rights to sexual and reproductive health by ensuring that full information and education are available for young people. We must adopt and apply policies and strategies to reduce maternal, infant and neonatal mortality and increase the contraceptive prevalence rate to at least 60 per cent by 2025. In that regard, the Government of Burundi is pleased to reaffirm its support — which it expressed at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development and to which it remains fully committed — for the continued implementation of the future programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The

Government of Burundi requests that the conclusions and recommendations in the Secretary General's report be included in the post-2015 development agenda.

In conclusion, may I say that my country, Burundi, is proud to join with the international community to reaffirm its support for the actions for the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, and for the innovative approach in the report of Secretary-General.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, on behalf of the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, I would like to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Under-Secretary-General Babatunde Osotimehin for the invitation to take part in the work of the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014.

The convening of the special session is clear testimony of the growing importance of population issues in our time. We emphasize in particular that this meeting is taking place as we are marking the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action in 1994 in Cairo. Today, we have an opportunity to review its implementation and to affirm the effectiveness of the large-scale Programme of Action in the context of the implementation of its goals and objectives by all Members States.

We have passed the decisive stage in the implementation of the Programme of Action and now must thoroughly and substantively examine what has been done, assess preliminary results, and elaborate plans and set benchmarks for the future. We believe that over the past 20 years, Member States and the Organization itself have accumulated vast experience of work in the practical implementation of tasks in population and development activities and that substantive and tangible results have been achieved. Decisions adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and other United Nations forums laid the basis for moving forward in the field of population and development by ensuring progress in our joint efforts and making us confident that the goals set will be achieved. We are convinced that the United

Nations strategy for action in that regard is correct and well-defined.

At the same time, in our view, today's special session is particularly relevant because it deals with the important issues that confront the international community as it implements its commitments in the field of population and development. Those issues include public health, education, gender equality, international migration and a number of others. They are part and parcel of the sustainable development goals, and we greatly appreciate the decision of the United Nations to hold national consultations with a view to preparing the new development agenda beyond 2014. Turkmenistan has taken an active part in that preparation.

In January 2013, at the initiative of Turkmenistan's President, we established a joint Turkmenistan-United Nations working group, the main task of which is to prepare and present proposals for global development in the next period. In addition, Turkmenistan, as a member of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, plays a substantive role in implementing the Programme of Action. When presenting our vision of objective requirements and prospects, we proceed from clearly defined priorities. Their goal is to tap to the fullest extent possible the potential of the State and society to solve the most important economic and social tasks, introducing the highest standards of morality and culture as the main criteria of development.

It is precisely those goals that we kept in mind when we undertook radical transformations of our economic and social spheres by launching large-scale national programmes in public health, protection of mothers and children, and many other areas. I should like to particularly emphasize the close interaction between the Government of Turkmenistan and the specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations in the practical implementation of joint population projects. For example, since 1992, our Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has implemented a whole range of joint activities. Those coordinated actions were based on programmes developed at the national level, and bilateral documents signed with UNFPA reflected specific measures to implement long-term population strategies.

There has been considerable success in improving the standards of living of our people in accordance

with the five-year country programmes signed by the Government of Turkmenistan and UNFPA.

First, I must speak of what we have achieved in public health. Turkmenistan was one of the first countries to adopt a national reproductive health programme. One of the main results was a broader and stronger reproductive health-care system at all levels in the country.

By working jointly with the United Nations Development Programme, UNFPA and other United Nations agencies, we systematically work towards ensuring gender equality, one of the major components of the ICPD Programme of Action. We have achieved significant results in that area, too.

Resolving the issues of international migration is an important problem in population concerns today. As a party to major United Nations conventions in that field, Turkmenistan has taken a number of practical steps to safeguard the rights of migrants, refugees and stateless persons. We have accumulated a vast amount of positive experience in how to actually implement the relevant United Nations multilateral instruments, which is now used by many countries.

In determining our approaches to actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, we are convinced that effective implementation can be possible only on the basis of consolidated multilateral efforts with the United Nations playing a leading role. Turkmenistan supports the report of the Secretary-General reflecting the common strategy on population and development as elaborated within the United Nations. We believe that our future joint activities to implement it will become a real, consolidating factor in global long-term policies.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana.

President Mahama: I bring greetings from the Government and people of Ghana and take this opportunity to welcome the Secretary-General's report entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), as well as the index report on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (see A/69/122).

Ghana is pleased to have contributed to the global survey for the review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. We have made considerable progress in implementing the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and have participated actively in thematic review processes organized through the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and other international organizations, including engaging with parliamentarians in Côte d'Ivoire and Sweden, civil society organizations in South Africa, religious forums in Istanbul, and ministerial meetings in New York, to mention but a few.

My participation in today's special session demonstrates Ghana's commitment to the ICPD and our continued engagement with the outstanding issues in the ICPD programme of work, particularly those related to women and young people. Over the past 20 years Ghana has made significant progress in implementing the Programme of Action. As my Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection emphasized in a meeting of the Economic and Social Council held earlier this year in New York, Ghana recognizes the importance of women as both agents and beneficiaries of social development and change.

There have been significant improvements in institutional mechanisms as well as policy frameworks for women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality and equity has increased, Geographical coverage, especially in rural areas, and access to health care and services have increased through our expansion of functional community-based health planning and services (CHPS) compounds in every region of the country. The number of functional CHPS zones grew from 868 in 2009 to 1,675 in 2011. Our community-based health planning services compound initiative has also brought primary health care and reproductive health services closer to our people.

Maternal mortality rates in Ghana have declined consistently since 1990, falling over the past decade from 750 deaths per 100,000 live births to 350 per 100,000 in 2010, a figure that is projected to drop even further by the 2015 target date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To achieve that decline, several mechanisms have been put in place. I have personally committed to implementing the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa, an initiative of the African Union Commission aimed at curbing the continent's high rate of pregnancy-

related deaths that has made significant strides in Ghana. Additionally, in 2011 my Government launched an MDG 5 acceleration framework designed to guide national interventions for speeding up our reduction of maternal mortality.

In the area of health infrastructure development, just a few weeks ago we announced the construction in two regions of Ghana — the most deprived one and the most populous one — of 15 new polyclinics, aimed primarily at tackling issues of maternal health and helping improve access to health care. Our gains have not been accomplished by the Government alone; the private sector is also contributing to improved access to health-care services with projects such as a programme for reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, aimed at supporting the Government in its efforts to achieve a 39 per cent contraceptive prevalence rate and reducing maternal mortality from unsafe abortions. The programme's partners have provided long-acting and permanent contraception to 106,126 women and comprehensive abortion care services to 133,291, as a result of which 254,000 unintended pregnancies, 1,250 maternal deaths and 161,000 unsafe abortions were averted. Over the years, the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana has expanded to cover a whole range of sexual and reproductive health-care services, delivering services and programmes through 1,356 outlets, including 11 permanent clinics, 54 mobile clinics and more than 1,000 community-based service points.

I have demonstrated my continued support to young people's issues by launching a youth policy and action plan. A youth entrepreneur support initiative has been selected to lead the design and implementation of the Big Idea project in Ghana, which is founded on the belief that open data in the hands of young people can be an effective driver of national and local level accountability and development.

We are fully committed to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and to supporting the outcome of our regional review and its findings and recommendations. We call for the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report, with its transformational vision, to be included in the post-2015 development agenda.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Ghana is proud to reaffirm its commitment to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and that at this high

political level I renew my Government's support for the action needed to fully achieve its goals and objectives, particularly those that ensure that our women do not die while giving birth and that every young person's dream of a decent life can be realized.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras.

President Hernández Alvarado (*spoke in Spanish*): Honduras would like to take this opportunity to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62), entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014", as well as the index report of the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122). We Hondurans would like to express our thanks to the Commission for organizing that debate in order to review the status of the implementation of the Programme of Action established in Cairo, pursuant to resolution 65/234, which also guides this special session of the Assembly on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

In that regard, Honduras would like to reiterate its support for the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and to highlight the importance and validity of universality, equality, mainstreaming, inclusiveness, solidarity, fairness, dignity and human rights in designing approaches to all vulnerable groups, as well as in addressing related issues in the areas of health, education, community, governance and sustainability, for the continued regional implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action and its key measures, including following up beyond 2014.

We are pleased that we were able to contribute to the *ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report*, especially as we have made considerable progress in implementing the Programme of Action. Primarily through our government institutions, we have achieved significant reductions in the crude death rate, the infant and maternal mortality rates, and the overall and unwanted pregnancy rates, and we have registered improvements in prolonging life expectancy, satisfying unmet needs for family planning, expanding coverage for antiretroviral medicines and preventing the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child.

As regards policy frameworks, our country has advanced significantly in the past 15-year period in the formulation of political policy. For example, the plan of action for 2010-2022, our country's vision, has as its main guideline the important consequences of demographic dynamics on our national development policy and our national policies with regard to human rights, the protection of youth, social protection and the integral development of children; and on the special law on HIV/AIDS and the law on equality of opportunities for women.

In the upcoming elections, women will have candidates for at least 50 per cent of posts in public office. I would like to take the opportunity to say that I was President of the Congress in Honduras when that measure was adopted. A strategy for achieving a speedy reduction in maternal and infant mortality, a national strategy to prevent adolescent pregnancies, and the second plan for gender equality and equity — all these are examples of what we have done to benefit thousands of Hondurans.

But the results of the survey also reveal persistent inequalities that threaten the human rights of many women and girls. We recognize that the problem of poverty continues to affect us; extreme poverty is mainly rural, with 58.7 per cent of the rural population being extremely poor. In addition, certain demographic trends are still associated with poverty and social inequality. Furthermore, problems relating to emerging opportunities exist in the relatively narrow demographic transitions in urban areas, the increasing age of the population's largest age groups, international migration and the persistent dual nature of the concentration and spread of the population in the territory.

Honduras is confronting those challenges and others, but at the same time, those challenges offer an important opportunity. The structure of our population is in the process of transition owing to changes in the fertility rate and in mortality rates. That transition means that, between 2015 and 2075, the proportion of the productive population from ages 15 to 64 will be higher than the dependent population. That means that there is a potential for adding to the economy, for generating wealth and greater potential savings, as well as for consumption. Likewise, with increasingly diverse household structures, different ways of life make it necessary for us to plan and build sustainable cities and to support and strengthen urban-rural links. The impact of population dynamics at the micro and

macro levels also mean that there is a need to integrate such population dynamics into development plans at the national, regional and international levels.

For that reason, we must develop a new framework for sustainable development. It is crucial that women, girls and marginalized and vulnerable young people be placed at the core of our priorities. Our new Government, in its plan for a better life for all, is focusing its attention on 800,000 families, in particular families headed by women. At the initiative of my wife, the First Lady of the nation, within the first 100 days of the Government's term, we launched a plan to reduce adolescent pregnancies. Drawing on the plan's guidelines, we are investing in education, in ensuring comprehensive sex education, in having men participate in solutions, in empowering adolescents and in guaranteeing health services to prevent pregnancy. The generation of jobs, together with investment in the education of young people, will also contribute to reducing that 23 per cent of the youth population that neither works nor studies, a group where women are at a greater disadvantage. We want to continue our efforts so that our young people are neither participants in nor victims of violence.

For example, there is a successful programme in Honduras that we have called the Job of Living Better. About 25,000 new jobs for young people who neither work nor study have now become a reality. Today, we reached an agreement for the training in English as a second language of about 200,000 young people per year. It is my hope that, in the coming three years, that figure will reach 600,000. All of that reaffirms our political will and commitment to adopt immediate measures that respond to the expectations of our population, eliminating existing inequalities, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. In addition, we recognize that the topics of population and development are closely related to the economic, social and environmental areas. In order to tackle all of that, we need to strengthen international cooperation and global, regional and subregional alliances.

Today, we make use of this General Assembly Hall to call upon the nations of the world to work to resolve this problem together and take responsibility for the situation of the thousands of children and adolescents who travel as unaccompanied migrants, not only from Honduras but also from Guatemala and El Salvador, and who arrive at the border in search of hope, fleeing the violence caused by organized crime, particularly drug

trafficking, trafficking in weapons and trafficking in dollars, which are the result of the drugs produced in the South and consumed in the North. Seven out of every nine children crossing the borders come from cities in Honduras that are on the drug trafficking route. Boys, girls and adolescents who migrate do so because of the lack of opportunity and they are seeking to reunite with their families.

I would like to reiterate my petition to the United Nations, and to the United States of America in particular, to support us on the basis of shared responsibility. Those of us from Central America, especially Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, have come with a plan that we have developed with the Inter-American Development Bank for submission to Secretary of State Kerry during this special session, to be delivered to President Obama. The plan is for an alliance for prosperity. Because if Central America is at peace, if Central America has opportunities, if it has a growing economy, that is a major investment benefiting not only the United States but also all humankind.

I would therefore ask all Member States for their support in the face of this phenomenon, which has recently spiraled out of control. Now is a propitious time to make a reality of our promise to the women and girls of Honduras. The path outlined by the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and the Secretary-General's global report (A/69/122) provide evidence that the Programme of Action must continue beyond 2014. The report and its principles are essential for the future attainment of the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development as it relates to the post-2015 development agenda.

The Government of the Republic of Honduras is firmly committed to contributing to the achievement of the dignity, equality, empowerment, rights and sexual and reproductive health of all women, with an emphasis on the most marginalized, in particular those in marginal urban areas and indigenous and Afro-Honduran women.

We express our support for the ICPD beyond 2014 and its monitoring framework as a basis for national and global information on processes to enhance the evaluation and implementation of the Programme of Action through the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Population and Development.

We affirm the full force of the commitments of the Quito Consensus of 2007 and the Brasilia Consensus of 2010, in particular those related to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women, the eradication of discrimination, the elimination of violence and the strengthening of State structures to promote their advancement and equality.

Ensuring the equal opportunities of women to education, decent jobs and positions of authority in all sectors of public life, adopting and implementing laws, policies and measures to prevent, punish and eradicate violence within the family and beyond, and improving the ability to recognize and to prevent violence, while ensuring the provision of services that can mitigate its consequences and the full rehabilitation of those who experience it, are not only justified in the context of human rights but also crucial to development.

Honduras would like to convey its thanks for the coordinated work of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Population Fund, and its contribution to the development of the actions mandated under resolution 65/234 and those relevant to the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia): It is my special honour and satisfaction to address this important meeting on behalf of the Republic of Serbia.

The improvement of the living conditions and the well-being of all people that the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development has dealt with for 20 years is just as compelling and relevant today as it was at the time when the Programme of Action was adopted. The Cairo principles set down the direction for the activity of the United Nations Member States. The fact that the exercise of human rights and dignity, age and gender equality, the empowerment of women, the protection of reproductive health and rights and the right to education for all are a part of the United Nations agenda beyond 2015 is indicative of the significance of those issues. Through this meeting, we reaffirm the validity of universally recognized rights on behalf of the peoples and countries that we represent.

The world has changed during those 20 years. The values that we believe in have remained the same

but the problems that we are faced with have not. Achieving the goals of the Programme of Action is, quite simply, a precondition for a life worthy of a human being, irrespective of his or her national or religious affiliation, gender, age or economic status. In its relentless struggle to better the living conditions of the population, the Government of the Republic of Serbia receives unstinting support from the United Nations Population Fund office in Serbia, which opened in 2006. We are working on the common task of reducing the current problems of a negative birth rate, the ageing population, extensive emigration, the unemployment of the younger population and, by the same token, the consequences that the negative indicators have had for economic growth.

The Republic of Serbia has been fully committed to economic recovery and internal reforms, while making every effort to contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals globally and taking an active part in formulating the post-2015 sustainable development goals. Membership of the European Union continues to be my country's first foreign policy priority. We view the accession process as a chance to improve the living conditions of our citizens.

The population picture in Serbia today is no different from that in the rest of Europe. The ageing of the population is the most noticeable demographic trend, Serbia's average age being the highest in South-East Europe. The difficult economic situation in the country accounted for the decline of the birth rate. In the past 50 years, the percentage of the younger generation decreased almost by a half, and 20 per cent of the population are aged 65 and over. Of particular concern is the fact that the worker-to-retiree ratio in Serbia today is one to one. Thirty years ago, the ratio was four to one.

Notwithstanding such difficulties, Serbia is making every effort to improve the situation of the elderly. The Council on Ageing and Old Age Affairs was established in 2007 as an expert advisory body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the national policy related to the older generations and the adaptation of international policies and strategies. To focus public attention on problems and discrimination facing the elderly and to highlight the importance of providing them with a proper living environment, every year we observe the International Day of Older Persons, designated as 1 October under resolution 45/106.

The empowerment of women is high on our agenda. The number of women in management positions has increased, while their percentage in terms of the least educated part of the population has decreased. The mortality of pregnant and parturient women in Serbia in the past 10 years has declined to the average level of the European region, while the number of abortions of unwanted pregnancies has been almost halved. By providing education and information to women, we are establishing the conditions for safe motherhood and contributing to the promotion and protection of reproductive health.

For Serbia, the question of population migration is of key importance. Close to 30,000 people, most of whom have a higher or high-school education and are about 10 years younger than the average age of the population, leave Serbia every year. Accordingly, we are faced with a continual brain drain. It is difficult to reconcile ourselves to those numbers, all the more so since we recall that, according to the statistical data, next to the United States, Serbia had the largest influx of immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its prestige was so great that many prominent scientists, doctors and politicians craved Serbian citizenship.

Regardless of the progress that we have made in promoting and improving the overall living conditions of the population of Serbia to date, we continue to face many challenges. To solve some of the population problems, we need to devise national strategies for population development and the protection of reproductive health. We expect the international community to help us in that regard. We believe that such a strategy would significantly contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals in Serbia, which remains strongly committed to the goal of sustainable development, as is demonstrated by its activities in the Economic and Social Council.

Every one of us has the right to be treated as we would wish others to treat us. In conclusion, let me quote former United States President John Kennedy, who said, in his report to the American people in 1963, that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Natalia Gherman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova.

Ms. Gherman (Moldova): I have the great honour to address the Assembly at this special session dedicated to the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Today's meeting offers us yet another opportunity to reaffirm our commitments to mainstreaming population issues in the framework of the new Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations development agenda.

Twenty years have passed since the ICPD Programme of Action was adopted. During that time, worldwide population trends have changed in many ways. While we pursue further the implementation of that important document, emphasis should be placed on priorities emerging from the demographic developments in each country and region. The unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Cairo Programme of Action, and the Beijing Platform for Action provides the groundwork of an international forward-looking agenda on population and development.

The implementation of the ICPD objectives in the Republic of Moldova, in conjunction with our European integration agenda, has brought about many positive results over the past few years. Our quality of life has improved, opportunities for individuals have expanded, and the role of women in the social and political life of the country has grown. Mainstreaming the ICPD principles and the MDGs in our national laws and regulations contributed significantly to those achievements.

We recognize at the heart of our development policies the interconnection and interplay between economic and demographic factors. Our objective is to shift the population and development paradigm from one focused on quantity to one focused on quality. By targeting more investment to human capital, while maintaining the protection of human rights as our guiding principle, we intend to improve the health and upgrade the skills of the population, with a view to generating economic prosperity and attaining demographic stability.

Investing in youth and women's empowerment, promoting active ageing and improving reproductive health are some of our immediate priorities. We will continue to work in that direction with our development partners, including the United Nations Population Fund, as the leading United Nations agency on population matters.

Today, following the start of the provisional application of the European Union-Moldova Association Agreement, which includes the free trade area as an integral part of it, we are moving even closer to visa-free travel between the Republic of Moldova and the members of the European Union. Open borders will not only spur economic growth but also improve welfare and promote human development. Since 2008, Moldova has been implementing a mobility partnership with the European Union. More than 160 migration and development projects have already been implemented. Today we share our experience and best practices with other countries in the European Union's eastern and southern neighbourhoods.

We also are actively engaged in the work of the Global Forum for Migration and Development. We welcome the latest European Union proposal, put forward at the most recent meeting of the Global Forum, whereby we would consider setting a global agenda for economic mobility, in order to promote the transparent international movement of labour, and would address the unnecessary bureaucratic barriers that migrants continue to face.

Last but not least, our past experience in designing and delivering on population-related goals show that good data collection is key for effective population planning and policy. A national strategic programme for demographic security until 2025 is currently being implemented in the Republic of Moldova. We aim to capitalize on the existing human potential, invest in human capital and facilitate the participation of all social groups in development processes.

In conclusion, the Republic of Moldova reaffirms its commitment to contributing to the international community's efforts to advance the scope and the goals of the ICPD.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Lemina Moma, Minister of Social Affairs, Children and Family of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Ms. Moma (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to express my personal congratulations to the President of the Assembly and the members of the Bureau on their election. I would also like, at the outset, to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for the report (A/69/122) in which he addresses the most important areas of interactive dialogue for the

forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development.

My country, like many other countries, has worked to achieve and implement the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, as per the directives of the President of Mauritania, who pays particular attention to those goals, not just in Mauritania but throughout Africa. That attention is reflected in many political strategies, including the strategy of the 2012 congress on population policies, which aims to achieve the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, including fighting poverty. The strategy places a strong emphasis on developing the social and educational sectors, with a particular focus on education for women and girls, illiteracy and reproductive health. It takes into consideration the particular needs of vulnerable segments of the population, including through promoting gender equality, women's rights and the economic empowerment of women; fighting all forms of violence against women and girls; providing employment for the younger population; and protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and the elderly.

We are aware that we have yet to complete our task and that we must therefore exert further efforts to improve the living standards of our citizens, establish justice and equality, and preserve the environment for the sake of our present and future generations. Those challenges will continue to be obstacles to economic prosperity for nations around the world.

On that basis, we reaffirm Mauritania's endorsement of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014. We also reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, as it meshes with our regional report and with the Secretary-General's recommendations on issues of population and development beyond 2014. On this occasion, we point to the need to incorporate the findings and recommendations covered in the Secretary-General's report (A/69/62) and in the Addis Ababa Declaration in the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is proud to add its voice to those of the Arab Group, the African Group, the Group of 77 and China, and the international community to once again reaffirm its commitment to and support for all population and development issues that are reflected in the ICPD Programme of Action,

while taking into account our cultural and religious specificities.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Pandey (Nepal): I thank the President for convening this meeting on an issue of paramount importance to all of us.

The Secretary-General's report (A/69/62) reveals that the world has made significant gains in achieving women's equality, health and life expectancy and educational attainment, in reducing discrimination and violence against the vulnerable segments of the population and in human rights protection systems. Despite the progress, there are considerable gaps in many countries, particularly the least developed countries, in achieving the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). In those countries, the population growth rate and increasing trends in migration and urbanization have been creating demands that outpace the economic growth rate and development gains. It is therefore high time to make an objective assessment of the progress and galvanize political support for action at the national, regional and global levels.

Nepal has been implementing its programmes in accordance with the ICPD principles and objectives, having participated in the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review. Guided by the ICPD principles, Nepal has been implementing a long-term population perspective plan to mainstream population and development issues in national and subnational development policies, plans and programmes. A new comprehensive population policy is under way. Our view on population and development under the ICPD process are as follows.

The total elimination of poverty should be at the core of all efforts in the people-centric development that we aim for. The implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other measures directed at the promotion and protection of the rights of the more vulnerable segments of the population — such as women, children, disabled persons and the elderly — has led to improved social and human development. Those measures have definitely brought positive results, and they should continue. Also, the right to development should be equally recognized as an integral and

inalienable part of all human rights, so as to make development sustainable and holistic in its approach.

Countries like Nepal have a higher proportion of people of working age in the population, which constitutes a demographic dividend that should be acknowledged as an asset for development globally. The role played by migrant workers in the development of countries of destination and countries of origin must be better appreciated globally, and suitable measures must be taken to protect their fundamental rights. The goals established in population and development activities should be matched by multistakeholder participation, and the galvanized efforts of those stakeholders should be particularly focused on addressing the needs of poorer countries, including those of the least developed countries.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by Her Excellency Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago is honoured to participate in this very special session of the General Assembly on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

We note with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014” (A /69/62), as well as the index report on the interactive debate during the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (see A/69/122). As Prime Minister, I have the honour and privilege to report that Trinidad and Tobago has contributed to the survey for the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review, and I wish to emphasize that Trinidad and Tobago has made considerable progress in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Allow me to enumerate some of the areas in which my Government has implemented the ICPD Programme of Action for the benefit of our citizens. Before I do so, let me reiterate that my Government has placed an emphasis on people-centred development, so that when we look at population and development, we are basically looking at human development. We see our philosophy as not just focusing on concrete and steel and buildings,

but on human resources and human development. Thus we have emphasized education, employment, health and the provision of several social safety nets for the poor through the Ministry of the People and Social Development.

It should be noted that a significant portion of our budgetary resources allocated for the upcoming financial year has been dedicated to education and to programmes that target women, especially single mothers. Once more, education has received the lion’s share of the national budget as we seek to make our education system “MDG-Plus”, which would result in Trinidad and Tobago achieving universal early childhood education by 2015. We have already achieved universal primary education and universal secondary education, so that we have education right up to the tertiary sector, which is free in our country.

I recently redesigned certain programmes in the ministry responsible for youth affairs with a view to ensuring that young people, especially the vulnerable, benefit through avenues available in the education system, as well as from skills-training, mentoring and youth health programmes. Most recently, in addressing issues of the poor, my Government introduced a new programme to provide financial assistance for any child born to underprivileged parents.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has achieved a number of successes with regard to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action. We are fully aware, however, that certain challenges remain. We are nevertheless committed to ensuring equality and equity in an environment that harnesses the talents of current and future generations.

Notwithstanding the strides we have made through proactive intervention by the Government, including the efforts made to improve the efficacy of our Central Statistical Office in order to promote evidence-based policymaking, we recognize that there is still a need for assistance from our development partners to strengthen our institutional capacity in some areas, including data collection and statistical systems. That would enable us to implement government policies more effectively. Special sessions such as these are therefore important. They provide Member States with the opportunity to share with each other best practices and other experiences. Additionally, a national population policy is in the process of being finalized and will further facilitate the level of data analysis to address key population issues.

We have already begun to put measures in place to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago is not left behind in the effort to implement a transformative post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, programmes are being developed by the relevant national agencies to address issues relating to prenatal and neonatal care, as well as other issues affecting the health of mothers and infants.

Trinidad and Tobago notes with satisfaction the emphasis placed in the Secretary-General's report on human rights-related matters, and we fully support the conclusion of the report that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity — across the multiple sectors of the ICPD and throughout the life course — is the foundation of sustainable development. We also recognize that sustainable development requires a holistic approach and recognition of the interlinkages between human rights and the population dynamics that have already materialized and those that continue to emerge.

Increasingly diverse household structures and living arrangements require us to plan and build sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages. It is therefore crucial that we understand the population dynamics at the micro-macro levels for seamless integration into development planning at the national, regional and international levels. We agree that the development challenges we face require the systematic participation of all stakeholders in crafting responses to those challenges, which in turn require partnership and global leadership through the United Nations.

My country is very proud to join the international community in reaffirming support for the historic ICPD Programme of Action, as well as for the transformational vision presented in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aiuba Cuereneia, Minister of Planning and Development of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Cuereneia (Mozambique): First of all, I would like, on behalf of the Government of Mozambique, to congratulate Mr. Kutesa on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

Mozambique has been actively monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development since its adoption in 1994, in Cairo. In terms of the subregion of the Southern

African Development Community, Mozambique has collaborated with fellow countries in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action. The most recent example was the convening in Maputo of the meeting of ministers responsible for the area of population and development. That meeting enabled us to return once again to the progress made by the countries of the subregion and to cover the documentation in a regional report. In addition, the issuance of the Maputo Declaration allowed for the inclusion of major regional concerns in discussions at the continental level. These in turn served as the basis for the global discussions held last April in New York.

We would also like to share some of the progress made by Mozambique since the adoption of the Cairo Programme of Action with those who are present at this session. One of the biggest gains was the elaboration of a population policy in 1999 and the institutionalization of population issues. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly those of adolescents and young people, deserve particular attention. In conjunction with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and other partners, youth-friendly centres to assist adolescents with sexual and reproductive health-related issues were established and attached to schools and health facilities.

Mozambique can affirm with pride that inequalities between women and men are being reduced, and that more than 30 per cent of the members of the Cabinet and around 40 per cent of parliamentarians are female. Moreover, we note with satisfaction the same trend between girls and boys in primary education, and we can therefore proudly say that there is gender parity at that level.

However, despite the remarkable progress, we still face challenges, including youth unemployment and the provision of education and health services. The remaining challenges prompt us to reiterate even more emphatically that both the Cairo agenda and the Cairo Programme of Action are still valid instruments that guide us as we pursue the goal of improving the living conditions of our population.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that the issue of respect for human rights and the promotion of equality between men and women, as well as the continuous improvement of the living conditions of our population, will continue to deserve the attention of our Government in the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Ms. Ploumen (Netherlands): I remember she told me her story once, and it went something like this:

“The men came and then they burned my village, tied my girls, took my girls, whipped my husband, cut my breasts. I ran away through the bush, found a boat, crossed the sand. Then they put me in here, in the detention centre.”

All of the stories of all of the girls started out with, “The men came and then they. . .”.

That is the story, for instance, of Little Bee from Nigeria — the heroine of the book *The Other Hand*. Little Bee’s story is about the search for security, about living under the constant threat of danger. Her story is about loss, loss that never ends. It is about what we are prepared to do for each other — for one’s sister, or husband, or child, or for a stranger. It is about how two women protect each other. I thought of that story as I prepared for this important session and about the need to look out for those who need our protection and in particular, the next generation of women and girls.

We can be immensely proud of the achievements made in the past 20 years. The agenda set by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 really brought change to people’s lives, all over the world. Fewer women now die in pregnancy and child birth. Skilled birth attendance has increased. More women have access to education, to work and to the political arena. Fewer adolescent girls are having babies too soon. Population growth has slowed.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our admiration for the impressive review process and the United Nations Population Fund’s laudable role. Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin’s leadership has been crucial. Yet, there is no room for complacency. The ICPD agenda is as relevant today as it was in 1994. Why? Because despite major achievements, more needs to be done to live up to the ICPD aspirations.

A crucial agenda such as this one cannot remain unfinished. Lives are at stake and we should truly leave no one behind. Each day, 800 women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, with 99 per cent of the deaths occurring in developing countries. For

adolescent girls in many countries, it is the main cause of death. More than 200 million women in developing countries want to prevent pregnancy, but lack access to effective contraception. The results are devastating: 80 million unintended pregnancies, 30 million unplanned births and 40 million abortions, half of which are unsafe and life-threatening. Globally, one in five girls gives birth before the age of 18.

Those are only a few examples showing why we must deliver even more on the promises of 1994. Let us renew our promises and deliver, particularly on the following points: comprehensive sexuality education for all young people; sexual and reproductive health services, information and education; and ending child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

I am very much encouraged by the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, since it addresses the issues of women’s empowerment and the ICPD agenda. Now we must follow through and adopt the relevant goals and make the requisite means available. The Netherlands is fully committed to making the ICPD ambitions a reality for all — in my own country, the Netherlands, and worldwide. It is important for individual well-being. But it is also important for societies that seek to prosper. We cannot waste the precious talents and resources of our young.

Yet, I realize that these are not easy issues. They often concern practices and customs that are difficult to discuss. But let us try to engage in open dialogue. Last year, during the general debate of the General Assembly, I co-hosted an event about early and forced marriage. There, many leaders opened up about the hopes they had for their daughters. It showed that we share a common humanity and that we all care deeply about the fate of the next generation. Let us talk together and work together with this generation on ways to renew our priorities based on the Cairo agenda. Let us ensure a world of rights and opportunities for them. Let us live up to the ICPD promise.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Nasim, Minister of Health and Family Welfare of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

Mr. Nasim (Bangladesh): Ever since Cairo, Bangladesh has consistently been committed to the principles, goals and objectives of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in

Cairo. In our national planning, we have considerably mainstreamed ICPD elements and accorded high priority to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

The Government is being guided by the Charter of the United Nations and our Constitution to ensure the well-being and dignity of every citizen through development efforts and investments in sustainable development, including the health sector, education, the promotion of gender equality and empowering women and creating decent work and employment opportunities. At the same time, we are conscious of ensuring good governance for the effective delivery of all services.

The progress made by Bangladesh since Cairo is well reflected in Bangladesh's attainment of most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With a population growth of 1.37 per cent, Bangladesh has demonstrated its ability to effectively control that growth. Currently, the total fertility rate is 2.3 live births per woman. Thirty-two per cent of births are attended by skilled health personnel. By 2015, it will reach 50 per cent. From the current rate of 61 per cent, we plan to reach a contraceptive prevalence rate of 72 per cent by 2015 and reduce the unmet need for family planning to 8 per cent, from the current 13.5 per cent rate in the same time frame. Both our infant mortality and our maternal mortality rates have seen a substantial reduction. We are on track to achieve all health-related MDGs.

Our plans and interventions at the subnational and national levels are geared to sustain and continuously improve maternal, child and reproductive health, with a special focus on equity and equality. One contemporary focus is to extend health services through 13,000 community clinics and 4,000 sub-district health and family welfare centres throughout Bangladesh at the rural and community levels. The health services delivery network is expanding rapidly. Efforts to improve health services delivery have already met with some success through delegated local-level planning.

Only last week, the Cabinet of Bangladesh, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, set the minimum age of 18 years for girls to marry. The Government is committed to enforcing all laws against child marriage. We believe that the recent legal measure imposing a two-year imprisonment on parents that force their adolescent girls to marry should improve the situation.

Bangladesh continues to champion women's empowerment, in a wider sense. Women's integration across all levels of planning is anticipated to foster gender equality in the country. Achieving gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment shows increased awareness about girls' education. Bangladesh has remained steadfast in achieving progress under the population and development framework. That is illustrated by our timely achievement of the MDG 1 targets. All of those facts reveal our overall social and economic improvements and the achievement of key ICPD goals and benchmarks. Yet, our aspiration to emerge as a middle-income country continues to face new challenges, risks and vulnerabilities.

Financing the ICPD targets has been the most daunting challenge before us. In responding to new challenges related to population and development and integrating them into our national agenda, it is equally important that least-developed countries such as Bangladesh receive technological, technical and financial support from the global community so as to meet the developmental challenges. For instance, challenges such as non-communicable diseases or climate change pose other grave risks. We already see many of our developmental gains at risk, including in the health sector.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We hope that the post-2015 development framework will capture the existing and emerging health and population issues robustly. Our unique circumstances, needs and challenges will need consideration and a development-focused approach. In that way the world will in good time secure a transformative and visionary global development agenda, encompassing all three dimensions of the sustainable development agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Mahabbat Bekbosynova, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Ms. Bekbosynova (Kazakhstan): It is a great honour for me to address, on behalf of Kazakhstan, this special session on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the historic International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. Twenty years ago in Cairo, back in 1994, Kazakhstan,

together with 178 other countries, endorsed the ICPD Programme of Action.

We are also at the most significant juncture in the history of the United Nations. Following the 15-year successful trajectory of the Millennium Development Goals, we are now about to usher in the post-2015 era of sustainable development. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us to determine the future of the more than 7 billion people of the world; yet while we forge global policies and strategies, we have to take cognizance of effective actions taken at the national level, actions which, collectively, will create new momentum across nations.

We are now in a position to review Kazakhstan's achievements and to discuss future priorities related to the country's population and development, as part of a multilateral effort. Kazakhstan has made significant progress since 1994, having achieved the target of MDG 1 on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger in 2007. This year we can report the achievement of MDG 5, namely, that we have lowered the maternal mortality rate from 55 per 100,000 live births in 1999 to 12.6 in 2013, registering a reduction of more than 75 per cent. Strides were also made in implementing the ICPD agenda, and its Programme of Action remains highly relevant for us, as it is in all other countries.

In accordance with the ICPD agenda, Kazakhstan's national policy is focused on increasing investments in protection and fostering capacities with respect to our children, adolescents and youth, especially girls and young women, in accordance with internationally agreed commitments. The aim is to equip the younger generation with the ability to realize their full potential and thus meet the labour demands of the economy of today and the next generation.

The President of Kazakhstan, in his most recent address to the nation, underlined the importance of ensuring strong support and guarantees with regard to improving the quality of services to persons with disabilities. Legislation has been enacted and programmes provided with a view to eradicating all forms of discrimination and enabling the full participation of such persons in the social, economic and political life of the country.

In order to sustain the progress made in decreasing maternal mortality and in achieving the levels found in developed countries, Kazakhstan hopes to provide universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health

services, with particular attention to adolescents and youth. Recognizing the importance of comprehensive education on matters of sexuality, we strive to offer it through both the formal and the informal educational systems so as to strengthen protection efforts regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as to facilitate the avoidance of unwanted pregnancies.

The focus on persistent inequalities — with regard to gender equality, the empowerment of women and access to sexual and reproductive health services — has revealed significant implications for development policy.

Valuing the importance of effective institutions, Kazakhstan is formulating strategies to improve the integration of population dynamics into development planning, at both the national and the subnational levels. In particular, the consideration of demographic trends is necessary in order to improve the planning and building of sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages.

To conclude, let me thank the United Nations Population Fund for holding this momentous special session of the General Assembly on the ICPD beyond 2014. We call for the inclusion of the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report (A/69/62) and the regional review outcomes regarding the post-2015 development agenda. Kazakhstan reaffirms its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action and the sustainable development goals through the equitable achievement of dignity and human rights, good health, security of place and mobility. We will ensure the achievement of those goals through capacity-building, technical assistance and true partnerships aimed at promoting good governance and accountability. Separately and collectively, we, the Member States, bear the responsibility for achieving integrated social, economic and environmental sustainability — not only now, but to 2030 and beyond.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Jensen, Minister for Trade and Development Cooperation of Denmark.

Mr. Jensen (Denmark): Today we are marking a landmark event — the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. Let me start by saying that I may be a politician, but today is not primarily about politics. Today is about humanity, gender equality and equal rights, the rights of every human being

to enjoy a life free of discrimination and with equal opportunities. Those are basic human rights. It is also the cornerstone of Danish development cooperation.

Today is about Diana, a young girl whom I met at a health clinic in Ghana. Diana had performed seven abortions on herself — seven — because she had no access to prevention, no access to information. Now, she had miraculously given birth to a healthy pair of twins. Today is about Farima and Mariama, the two women I met in the village of Congola, in Mali. They had just recently become aware of their democratic rights. From then on, things moved quickly. Farima was now running for the position of mayor of the village.

Today is also about the gay, lesbian and transgender youth, who fear for their safety and health but hold their heads high with great hope for the future. One of the best ways to lift people out of poverty and promote human rights is by contributing to gender equality, ensuring that girls who are already in school are followed by many others and that they make it not just to primary school, but to secondary and longer term education as well, and that women can exercise their right to participate fully in decision-making at all levels and gain access to resources and skills that will enable them to take control of their lives and contribute to society.

As one can see, here we have moved from humanitarian concerns to plain and simple common sense. Why leave out half of the population?

The normative development and implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action has greatly improved the lives of many through its insistence that equality and respect for and promotion and protection of human rights are at the heart of sustainable development. However, we have learned from the ICPD beyond 2014 review process that we still have a long way to go. And Denmark is committed to moving forward. We owe it to the many women, girls and young people who are still left behind.

Denmark welcomes the findings and recommendations of the ICPD beyond 2014 review process. Human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights for all are preconditions for ending extreme poverty and ensuring sustainable development. The holistic approach put forward by the ICPD Programme of Action is key in that regard. The index report highlights some of the most pressing challenges that remain.

As the world faces the largest ever generation of young people, it is imperative that we secure their sexual and reproductive health and rights through youth-friendly services, regardless of marital status, including the removal of barriers. Notably, adolescent girls face challenges, as they lack access to education and have to deal with unwanted pregnancies, the risk of maternal death and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

I applaud the fact that the index report finds that Governments from all regions of the world consider universal access to comprehensive, high-quality and integrated sexual and reproductive health to be one of the highest priorities for the global development agenda beyond 2014. Moreover, it is considered essential to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Alongside access to modern methods of contraception, safe abortion, post-abortion care and comprehensive sexuality education will go a long way towards addressing unplanned pregnancies and the deaths that, far too often, are the deeply tragic result. That also applies to the many tragic maternal deaths that occur every day owing to unsafe abortion. In order to eradicate those unnecessary deaths, safe access to abortion and post-abortion care must be provided. Given the scope and magnitude of the challenges that lie ahead, it is crucial to be able to address the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014, taking into account the findings and recommendations of the operational review.

Denmark will continue to strongly support the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the integration of its key objectives into the post-2015 development framework. If the post-2015 development framework is to be effective and provide lasting results, it must be based on the international human rights framework and its central principles of participation, non-discrimination, inclusion and accountability. That includes upholding anti-discrimination measures that address intersecting forms of discrimination, including those based on age, sex, economic status, language, ethnicity, disability, migration status, sexual orientation, gender identity and other social categories included in the index report.

The post-2015 development framework must give priority to the core goals of gender equality, the empowerment of women, investment in young people, inclusive economic growth and universal access to

sexual and reproductive health and rights. It must ensure that women and men, throughout their lifetime, are able to make their own decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives and have the means to do so. Failing to deliver on the promise of the ICPD is not just a failure to fulfil fundamental human rights; it is also poor economics and a step backwards in our common fight for sustainable development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Salim Muslimov, Minister for Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Muslimov (Azerbaijan): I would like to thank the President for providing the opportunity to evaluate the 20-year term of the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action of 1994. The year 1994 coincided with the early years of our independence. The political, economic and social crisis of that period was further worsened by the occupation of some 20 per cent of Azerbaijani lands by Armenia and the presence of about 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons. Despite the difficult times, the President of Azerbaijan attended the Cairo Conference, and later on our country incorporated the goals of the Programme of Action into its national policies.

Since 1995, our country has entered a new phase of development with extensive economic reforms. In a short period of time, Azerbaijan has become one of the leading countries in terms of socioeconomic development. The latest United Nations Human Development Report ranks Azerbaijan 76th among 187 countries. According to the *Global Competitiveness Report* of the World Economic Forum, Azerbaijan ranks 38th among 144 countries in the world.

In the post-Conference period, population issues have remained high on our national agenda. In 1999, Azerbaijan became the first post-Soviet country to adopt a national strategy on demographic development. Its implementation had a significant positive impact on demography, health, education, employment, gender equality and the regulation of migration. Over the past 10 years, our population has grown by 26 per cent. The annual population growth rate is 1.3 per cent, and life expectancy has increased by 4.6 years to its current 74.2 years. The poverty rate has declined tenfold, and the unemployment rate has declined by a factor of 3.5 times to the current rates of 5.3 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively.

The population policy remains our national priority. Therefore, we have drafted a new State programme on population and demographic development for the period up to 2025. In that context, I want to emphasize the role of cooperation with international organizations, especially the United Nations Population Fund, in the effective implementation of the principles of the Programme of Action in our country.

I hope that today's recommendations will preserve the continuity of the Cairo Conference and lay the foundation for the post-2015 development agenda. Azerbaijan remains committed to the goals of the Programme of Action and will make further efforts to ensure its implementation.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau, Jr., President of the Republic of Palau.

President Remengesau: I am honoured to be here today representing my country, Palau, and the Pacific Islands Forum as its current Chair.

I applaud the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), especially in the context of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The focus of UNFPA on the well-being of individuals and the focus on the interrelationships among population, human rights, sustainable development and economic growth are certainly relevant to all developing and, for that matter, developed nations.

I am probably one of the most unlikely speakers today, as my small island developing country, despite a near no-growth rate over the past decade, has nevertheless attained the Millennium Development Goals and has demonstrated its adherence to a consistent path towards sustainable development. Yet that apparent success does not tell the whole story. With an annual worldwide population growth of approximately 75 million people a year, or almost 1.1 per cent, we have simply overpopulated our planet over the past century. As a result, our industrial complex must continue to grow, not only at the "keep-up" rate of 1.1 per cent, but at a much higher rate, in order to deal with issues of economic equality and development. As a result, we find that we are polluting our oceans, our atmosphere, our cities and, at the end of the day, our quality of life.

In my Pacific Island region countries generally have small populations. However, in the Pacific there

are many countries with very high population densities. Because many of those countries exist in fragile atoll environments, high population densities challenge our water supply systems and our sanitation and solid waste management systems, and present serious environmental and health risks. When the issues relating to distance, size and transportation are combined, we end up with unique population problems at the social, commodity, agricultural, cultural, economic and environmental levels. So, like our larger neighbours, we too face the stresses of expanding population.

While we can work around the clock analysing the various aspects of the international responses to population increase, until we face the ultimate issue of population, we are simply rowing our canoes in an endless circle. I often wonder why we all do not just come out and say it: we need to come to terms with population growth, or a global disaster will find us all. If our populations stopped growing, greenhouse gases would decline. If our populations stopped growing, we could implement real sustainable development that does not have to endlessly chase percentage increases in economic growth. If our populations stopped growing, we could magically improve the human condition, protect human rights, reduce regional conflict, moderate the loss of biodiversity, protect our children, improve medical capacities, ensure food security, improve mortality rates, reduce migration and plan wisely for our national, regional and global futures.

Of course, this is possibly the greatest challenge that we, as the race of humans, face on this planet — greater than climate change, perhaps, greater than international conflict, greater even than poverty, For reducing population impacts them all. It is the primary challenge that will directly impact all of our other challenges.

I therefore believe that it is time that we change our global focus and open our eyes to the large elephant in our closet and make the reduction of the global population a primary goal of the Organization. Within that context, we can certainly continue to work to respond to the many impacts of expanding population. I stand ready to offer my small assistance in that effort.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Andris Piebalgs, European Commissioner for Development of the European Union.

Mr. Piebalgs (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The full version of this statement will

be posted on the websites of the special session and of the delegation of the European Union.

The European Union and its member States welcome the holding of this special session, which provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the progress made since the the holding of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and to consider in a comprehensive manner the many challenges remaining beyond 2014 in all aspects of the Cairo agenda at the intersection of development and human rights.

The ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review, with its strong focus on human rights and extensive evidence-based research, provides compelling evidence as to the importance of individual rights and capabilities as the driver for all areas of development. Together with recently prepared United Nations documents, it provides a holistic vision for Governments to demonstrate political will to address gaps and challenges.

Although dramatic improvements have been achieved, progress has been insufficient, fragmented and uneven. We cannot expect progress in development unless human rights, women's empowerment and gender equality are upheld as essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development.

Over the past 20 years, the European Union and its member States have strongly promoted human rights, anti-discrimination, gender equality and women's empowerment, including in the fight against all forms of gender-based violence, which violates the rights of women and girls and harms them in so many ways. We have provided considerable support for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in areas such as education, health services and safe drinking water and sanitation, which have benefitted millions of women and men, girls and boys, older and younger, especially the most vulnerable, thus contributing to the reduction of inequalities.

Development and human rights are clearly interrelated, and we are committed to moving towards a rights-based approach in the European Union development policy. Persistent inequalities are faced by groups that are discriminated against on the basis of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, HIV status, marital status and sexual orientation or gender identity, including through the persistence of discriminatory laws or the unfair and discriminatory application of laws.

We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the ICPD Programme of Action and to the outcomes of their review conferences, including the rights to sexual and reproductive health. Promoting and ensuring access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and to comprehensive evidence-based education on human sexuality, consistent with individual needs and evolving capacities, is crucial. It improves maternal, newborn and child health, as well as access to family planning and quality modern contraception methods and reduces the threat of HIV/AIDS.

Population dynamics reflects the world's dramatic disparities and varied trends, including the emergence of age groups with special needs. Population dynamics must be addressed and harnessed by rights-based and gender-responsive policies, as well as by investment in human capital. Migration, including internal migration, is both an opportunity and a challenge for development. Migration has significant economic, social and environmental impacts for countries of origin and destination, as well as for migrants themselves. All States should better organize legal migration, and ensure that migrants are able to fully exercise their fundamental rights.

In conclusion, the European Union and its member States would like to reaffirm that the principles and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action, together with key actions for their further implementation, should be carried forward beyond 2014, the focus being on the gaps identified in the reviews, and should be taken into account in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Pascale Boistard, Minister of State for Women's Rights of the French Republic.

Ms. Boistard (France) (*spoke in French*): Today, 200 million women have no access to contraception. Twenty million voluntary abortions are carried out every year in unsafe conditions and result in the deaths of 50,000 women, who often leave many orphaned children behind. Eight million such women are affected by complications and truly dreadful infections caused by those unsafe abortions. This represents such suffering for those thousands of women who pay so dearly for the freedom to have control over their own body. It is additional violence imposed on those who are

from the poorest sectors of society. Two hundred years ago in France, on a September day in 1791, one woman, Olympe de Gouges, wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen. Thinking about the suffering of women who had illegitimate children, she demanded that the fathers should acknowledge them, so that a barbaric prejudice would not force women to hide the truth.

As we approach the post-2015 development agenda, I believe that we should clarify shared definitions, such as sexual and reproductive rights. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 sought to establish those rights. The International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo subsequently affirmed that women's fundamental rights included the right of a woman to control her own sexuality and maternity, without being subject to any constraints or violence, and to be free to take her own decisions. On that basis, France wants to ensure that those rights are affirmed at the international level and reflected in national laws.

In order to exercise control over their choice to life, women must be educated and informed so that they know how to make a choice. They must know about the various kinds of contraception available, and have unhindered access to them. Therefore, in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda, France proposes universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and it supports all efforts to provide education, education for girls, as well as for boys. When there is a return to conservatism and obscurantism, the road is a long one, and the point when we will realize habeas corpus for women is still distant.

France wants to continue to engage at the United Nations for true equality, which will finally enable women to have control over their lives and their fate. If we are able to do that, then together we will have moved our societies forward towards a sustainable society marked by justice and freedom.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Immigration and Asylum of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): The Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action marked a fundamental step forward. Sensitive but essential themes for achieving sustainable development issues finally found the place

they deserve in the international agenda. Luxembourg respects and is implementing the principles and recommendations of the Programme of Action at both the national policies level and in terms of its policies on development cooperation and humanitarian action.

But 20 years after the Cairo Conference, we are still far from the goals that we set ourselves. I commend the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62) on the operational review of the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, which clearly explains why those principles remains very important. In that sense, Luxembourg supports the integration of the recommendations and conclusions of that operational review in the post-2015 development agenda, that should be based on the principles of human rights, dignity and equality for all.

Sustainable development will not be possible without taking into account the demographic dynamics, health, including sexual and reproductive health, education, population movements and urbanization, as well as good governance and mutual accountability. The eradication of poverty is the fundamental goal, but it must be equitable and universal. The world we want for the post-2015 era is a world free of all stigma and discrimination, where everyone will be equal and able to exercise their fundamental rights. Empowering women and gender equality is an essential pillar that needs to be strengthened. Unfortunately, 20 years after the historic Cairo Conference, women and girls still suffer greatly from discrimination and violation of their rights, unequal opportunities, violence, etc. It is high time to end that.

Similarly, it is time to ensure that every child has access to quality primary and secondary education and to ensure their transition in the world of employment governed by social protection policies and programmes. The goals with regard to sexual and reproductive health have made little progress. That needs to be underscored. In line with the Millennium Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action, we must continue to work towards universal and equitable access to sexual and reproductive health without discrimination or stigmatization. One must ensure the integration of those services in national policies and national health systems. That includes family planning services and the provision of adequate means of contraception, the prevention and treatment of sexually-transmitted

diseases, including HIV/AIDS, the health of mothers and children and sexual education.

Luxembourg supports those principles in its bilateral cooperation programme. This year it published its new sectoral strategy on health, in which sexual and reproductive health in all forms have a fundamental place. It is among the pillars of universal health coverage. I wish to reaffirm today, from this rostrum, the continuing political and financial commitment of our Government for the comprehensive implementation of the Programme of Action of the Conference on Population and Development and its integration in the post-2015 agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Twenty years after its adoption, the relevance of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, has proven to be unquestionable. World population growth has occurred mostly in developing countries. Nonetheless, global wealth is even more concentrated in the industrialized world. The systemic crisis generated in the developed countries has had a stronger impact in developing countries, which have most of the world's population and most of the world's poverty.

The prevailing system of international relations is unjust and unequal. The gap between developed and developing countries and between rich and poor has widened. Millions of human beings, particularly in countries of the South, who are victims of hunger and illiteracy, have no access to basic health services and adequate housing. Poverty denies them a decent life. Humankind would disappear with the explosion of just a tiny portion of the huge nuclear arsenals, the very existence of which is a serious threat. Richer countries plunder the planet's non-renewable resources and impose unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, aggravating climate change, which threatens the preservation of our species.

The Cuban revolution ensured the exercise by its people of all human rights, including the right to sexual and reproductive health, which includes family planning, sex education, the legalization of abortion and equality between women and men. The tenets of the country's economic and social policy continue to give special importance to the sexual and reproductive

rights of the entire population and to demographic dynamics, with particular attention to stimulating the birth rate and responding to the aging of the population.

The implementation of the national programme for following up the Cairo agreements and our entire national strategy on population are severely affected by the genocidal economic, commercial and financial blockade sustained and exacerbated by successive United States Administrations against the Cuban people. We reaffirm our determination to continue translating into reality our commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 and to the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Aging, which is a milestone towards the attainment of the goals and objectives approved in Cairo.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gerd Müller, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Müller (Germany): Germany greatly welcomes this special session of the General Assembly. After 20 years, the recommendations of the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development are still as relevant as before. More and more people are living on our planet, and by the middle of this century there will be more than 9 billion. They are becoming older and more mobile. That population dynamic is a great challenge for sustainable development.

I want to thank the Secretary-General for the very clear reports (A/69/62 and A/69/122) that were presented to the General Assembly today.

Especially in developing countries, pregnancy and childbirth complications are among the most frequent causes of death for young women and girls. In 2013, such complications killed about 300,000 women worldwide. And 200 million women in developing countries still have no access to modern means of birth control. There are still girls and women who are forced into marriage. Women suffer violence and genital mutilation. We cannot and must not accept that. Gender equality, no violence, not just on paper but in real life - that is what we stand for; that is what we are fighting for. Therefore, Germany has provided \$4.3 billion over the past 20 years to help implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Human dignity is inviolable. That means there must be compliance with human rights. Gender equality must become a reality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights have to be ensured. Germany supports the Cairo Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sékou Traoré, Minister of Planning of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Traoré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): In this brief statement, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session, devoted to population and development. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my most sincere thanks to the international community, which has truly demonstrated solidarity with Guinea in response to the Ebola outbreak ravaging my country.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States.

On the issues of population and development, may I say that our country has made significant progress in recent years. Among other things, we have become more aware of the importance of the population issue within the family and indeed within the entire Guinean society and in the actions of the State, strongly supported by the international community, including United Nations agencies. Encouraging results have been achieved, which prompts us to redouble our efforts not just to consolidate the achievements, but above all to deal with the social and demographic indicators, which are characterized by the following. Women make up 52 per cent of Guinea's population, and the majority of them are illiterate and poor; 45 per cent of the population as a whole is under 15 years old; eight women die every day in childbirth, a ratio of 724 deaths per 100,000 live births; and 96 per cent of women have undergone female genital mutilation. There has been significant but under-recognized internal migration, with urbanization accelerating since 1984 and a concomitant exodus that is depriving rural areas of their economically active people; and a deterioration of the environment that is largely the result of demographic pressures, mining and certain traditional agricultural practices. Guinean society still has marked rates of gender inequality.

Based on the data provided by the 1994 demographic survey and the 2014 review, we believe that Guinea's population has grown by 8 million. That means that

we cannot find lasting solutions to our problems of food security, the environment, health, poverty reduction, youth unemployment and gender-based violence without dealing with our demographic issues. Overall, we are looking towards the future with much hope, serenity and determination, for today, Guinean society is undergoing qualitative change. Women's status is improving, and the fight against HIV/AIDS is becoming more effective, as are health-care services, particularly as regards reproductive health, which are now reaching an increasing number of women. More and more children, and girls in particular, are attending school. I am convinced that, in defining our social, economic and demographic goals, we have embarked on a new path to sustainable development.

However, it will be difficult to achieve that result if we do not invest in young people, in family planning and in building sustainable cities, for which we must strengthen the links between cities and the countryside. The structures of households and ways of life demand it. That investment requires that we take into account the dynamics of the population on the development front at every level, and will be even more effective with greater support from the international community through our development partners. Lastly, we note that the ICPD post-2015 deals not only with the concerns that I have discussed but also emphasizes other aspects, such as poverty reduction, the need for countries to take action in order to benefit from demographic dividends, good governance, the protection of the environment, the creation of alternative financing for development, and the promotion and protection of human rights. It is for all those reasons that we support the overarching goal and objectives of the ICPD's Programme of Action beyond 2014.

In conclusion, we should recall that, in our changing world, our efforts are being carried out in the face of the challenges they encounter. We should rethink Africa's place and role in international relations. That will enable us to define the continent's contribution to building a new framework based on sustainable development, within which the ICPD's Programme of Action can still be a source of inspiration for all of us, as the Secretary-General said.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Arnold Nicholson, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Nicholson (Jamaica): I am pleased to be participating in this special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Jamaica is deeply committed to a global partnership that provides a holistic and integrated framework for achieving an improved quality of life for the people of the world. The Programme of Action of the ICPD should, therefore, prioritize the development and protection of human capital; facilitate economic stability, competitiveness and employment; and promote environmental resilience and appropriate responses to climate change.

Jamaica is privileged to be among a select group of countries that sits on the United Nations Commission on Population and Development. We have also been at the forefront of population and development policies in the Latin American and Caribbean region, as the first Caribbean country to develop a national population policy, revised in 1995, and a plan of action on population and development in 1995 consistent with the ICPD Programme of Action up to 2015.

Jamaica's position, as it relates to the process of the ICPD beyond 2014, is to reaffirm the Programme of Action adopted in Cairo in 1994 and to ensure implementation of the key actions that have not yet been completed. We are not in favour of a renegotiation of the existing agreements in the text. We are pleased to have contributed to the global survey for the review of the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and to be able to report that we have made considerable progress in implementing it. We recognize the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which contributed significantly to the review process in Jamaica. The UNFPA continues to work tirelessly at the country level towards national attainment of the objectives outlined in the ICPD.

The review revealed that Jamaica has made progress on more than 80 per cent of the 110 issues explored in the survey. The achievements varied from developing and implementing policy and legislation to infrastructure development; from improvements in the reach and content of service delivery systems to strengthening research capacity and improving research relevance and applicability. Strengthening partnerships among Government agencies, between agencies and communities and between Government and civil-society organizations was another key achievement.

For the period under review, Jamaica recorded achievements in reducing population growth and pregnancies among all reproductive-age groups, including adolescents. Reductions were also recorded in mother-to-child transmission of HIV and in deaths due to HIV and AIDS. We are also pleased to have made progress in reducing infant, child and maternal mortality. All of that has been facilitated by universal access to quality, affordable health services, including for reproductive health, family planning and sexual health, as well as access to primary and secondary education. We have also been operating within a framework of gender equity and equality and women's empowerment, with the overall objective of reducing poverty.

We recommend that the post-2015 development agenda ensure a stronger focus on sustainable development as the framework for population policy and programme interventions by continuing to concentrate on reducing fertility among adolescents and youth; curbing infant, child and maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS; and ensuring the integration of population aging in all development policies, plans and programmes. Furthermore, attention should be paid to population growth and distribution and their linkages to urbanization and climate change policies and planning. We are also of the view that human rights and gender issues should be integrated into all policies, plans and programmes dealing with population issues.

Jamaica remains committed to continuing to work together with the international community to forge a more effective global partnership for development. Let us together rise to the challenge of shaping an agenda that will truly be transformative and secure the well-being of our peoples.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Sveinsson (Iceland): The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo was ground-breaking. It was the first time that we came together as sovereign nations to address the impact of the growing world population and that we agreed on concrete measures to deliver a more equal and sustainable world for all. At the Conference, we recognized the linkage between our everyday activities and the use of natural resources, the state of the environment and the pace and quality of economic

and social development. We also recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women should be global priorities; and that women's ability to access sexual and reproductive health and rights is a cornerstone of their empowerment, not only from a human rights perspective but as a key element of sustainable development, poverty eradication and the stabilization of population growth. In short, the world agreed that population is not just about counting people, but about making sure that every person counts.

We have made great progress in several areas in the past 20 years. However, progress can be uneven and slow, in particular for women and girls. To step up the pace, it is vital to increase focus on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls. Programmes on family planning, maternal health services, HIV prevention, information and education are relatively inexpensive yet have clear benefits for society as a whole. Economically, the return on investment can be as high as \$150 per \$1 spent.

Iceland is fully committed to the further implementation of ICPD Programme of Action. We have a valuable opportunity in 2015, when we will renew our commitments and adopt a new development agenda. Keeping the promises made in Cairo must be among the goals and targets agreed. In this regard, allow me to reiterate that we welcome and endorse the recent global review report of the Secretary-General as an essential contribution to the post-2015 development agenda.

Let me also commend the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its Executive Director for their leadership and critical work in fulfilling the ICPD Programme of Action. Iceland is proud to support UNFPA's efforts, in particular to eliminate harmful practices against women and girls, such as female genital mutilation, and fistula, which could easily be eradicated if more Member States supported UNFPA's work.

We do not need new commitments, new negotiations or new words. We need to do what we promised in Cairo — not only because it is the smart thing to do, but because these promises concern the fulfilment of the fundamental human rights of each one of us. We have to make sure that every person counts.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Hasna Barkat Daoud, Minister for the Promotion of Women of the Republic of Djibouti.

Ms. Daoud (Djibouti): It is my great honour to address the situation in the Republic of Djibouti with respect to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Conference is of such great importance to the Republic of Djibouti that I am joined here today by our Minister of Health.

When it comes to equality and respect for human rights, the Republic of Djibouti, in order to attain the goals of parity established at the continental and global levels, has put in place quotas to bridge the existing gaps in this area. Today, among other things, we can be proud of the fact that the President of the Supreme Court is a woman. With regard to education, which is free and obligatory for all to the age of 16 years, there is total equality in primary education, while work remains to be done in secondary education.

In the area of health, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is 2.7 per cent, which has been stable since 2003, with nonetheless a slight increase in the proportion of those affected being women. To fight against this scourge, anti-retroviral treatments and tests are free for all persons living in Djibouti regardless of nationality. The infant mortality rate was reduced from 140 per 1,000 live births to 90 in 2010. The maternal mortality ratio decreased from 740 to 306 per 100,000 from 1996 to 2013. As I stand here today, the universal health insurance mechanism is being implementing.

On the economic front, while Djibouti does not possess natural resources, it has valuable assets in the form of its geographically strategic location and its human resources. Profits from the international port and the telecommunications sectors are used to benefit the population, the President of the Republic having decided to redistribute the economic dividends of these sectors, in particular to help those most in need. In this regard, the national social development initiative, as well as a publicly financed national solidarity fund, was launched in 2007, under the aegis of the Secretary of State for National Solidarity. Social strategies targeting the poorest, especially in rural areas, are being implemented. The solidarity fund is also tasked with addressing the challenges facing persons with special needs and the elderly.

The empowerment of women is a pillar of the 2035 vision that follows on from the national social development initiative. It is being pursued in the framework of the national gender policy that was adopted in 2011. Furthermore, family planning has been expanded beyond the medical sector into the

Department in charge of women's affairs, which I have the honour of heading. In that context, a family planning strategy is currently being drawn up to prioritize the demographic outcomes as development tools for the country.

I cannot conclude my remarks without referring to the campaign that the women and men of Djibouti have been waging for some 30 years now with a view to eliminating violence against women, in particular female genital mutilation. This fight is being led by the First Lady, whose efforts include the convening of a number of regional and international conferences in Djibouti and the seeking of consensus among religious leaders. Thanks to that substantive work, the most barbarous form of female genital mutilation, pharaonic circumcision, is no longer practiced in Djibouti.

Our national policies on migration, violence and security can only be carried out on the basis of both international agendas, such as the one underpinning this special session, and, at the intermediate level, regional agendas. Djibouti is fortunate to be party to all the regional and subregional arrangements, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and it is in that context that we are implementing regional policies, in particular for population and development. IGAD has established a strategy in that regard.

Therefore, along with other countries, the Republic of Djibouti will, in order to ensure a better future for our people, actively participate in the efforts, at both the regional and the international levels, to follow up on the ICPD beyond 2014.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Australia.

Ms. Bishop (Australia): Women and children are bearing the brunt of increasingly violent conflict and protracted humanitarian crises around the world. There is disturbing evidence that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is targeting women and children, kidnapping and selling girls and systematically raping women and children. It has been 161 days since 273 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria because they were in school. There are reports that those girls are being sold.

The violent targeting of women and girls during conflict; trafficking in women and children; child marriage caused by poverty and insecurity; high rates

of early pregnancy; and the increasing rates of HIV infection in adolescent girls are all utterly intolerable. All the while, basic global norms protecting the rights of women and girls are being challenged and questioned.

At this time, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its subsequent reviews are as relevant as they were 20 years ago. We must protect the progress we have made. We reaffirm our commitment to seeing the Programme of Action implemented in full. Together, we must work to advance the rights of women and girls and not allow those rights to be eroded.

Australia will not turn away from that commitment at home, in our region and beyond. Over the past 20 years in our region, maternal mortality rates have dropped by 50 per cent, but we still face challenges. UNICEF reports that, in South Asia, one in five girls is married before the age of 15, and in South and South-East Asia, almost one in 10 girls becomes pregnant before they are 16. Complications from pregnancy are a leading cause of death for girls and young women in developing countries, and violence against women is a global scourge.

Protecting women from violence, promoting women's economic empowerment and supporting women's leadership in the family, community, business and politics are priorities, both in Australia and internationally through our diplomacy and our aid. We are determined to ensure that gender equality, women's empowerment and sexual and reproductive health and rights are firmly embedded in the post-2015 development agenda.

Australia seeks to protect and promote the rights of women and girls in all settings, including humanitarian and conflict situations. We work with the United Nations Population Fund to deliver family planning and other support services. I witnessed the distribution of women's health supplies when I visited Tacloban in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan last year. I saw at first hand the positive impact of our support on women. That exemplified our commitment to maternal and child health and family planning, including through our aid programme.

In last Friday's Security Council debate on Iraq (see S/PV.7271), I announced that Australia will provide a further \$2 million to the United Nations Population Fund to continue its work to protect women and girls in Iraq. We must all commit to ensure that Iraqi women and

girls are protected and supported. The lives of women and girls should be free from violence. They should be free to exercise their rights to make choices about their own bodies, fertility and health. Girls should have safe access to education. Girls who go to school and stay in school can get better jobs, participate in and lead their communities and become powerful drivers of growth, development, peace and security

Australia has set a benchmark for our aid programme, committing itself to the requirement that at least 80 per cent of all development activities have a gender equality focus. Australia also has an ambassador specifically for women and girls: former Senator Natasha Stott Despoja. We are one of only a handful of countries with a dedicated advocate at the ambassador level who is engaged internationally in working to shift attitudes about the role, value and contribution of women around the world.

I reaffirm Australia's commitment to the rights of women and girls, and I reaffirm Australia's commitment to action to protect, promote and advance those rights in Australia, throughout our region and around the world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sodnomzundui Erdene, Minister for Population and Development and Social Protection of Mongolia.

Mr. Erdene (Mongolia): On behalf of the Government of Mongolia and our representatives, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the organization of this special session on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and support the report of the Secretary-General on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014 (A/69/62) and the index report prepared by the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122).

Over the past 20 years, Mongolia has made and is making every effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implement the ICPD Programme of Action. As a result, Mongolia has achieved the objectives of reducing infant mortality, improving maternal health and limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The first major achievement in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action that we would like to mention is the fact that the population and development issue has been integrated into our national development documents, including the national population policy, thus fully integrating human rights and sexual and reproductive rights, and the Millennium Development Goals were incorporated at the state policy level and became the basis for our comprehensive national development strategy. Our Green Development Policy, recently approved by Parliament, is aimed at decreasing ecosystem degradation, ensuring inclusive participation and reducing poverty. Mongolia has also been successful in institutionalizing comprehensive sexual education in our secondary schooling.

Our country made significant progress in creating strategies and an implementation mechanism for legislation on gender equality, in empowering women, in promoting gender equality and in increasing women's participation in politics at the decision-making level. Progress in that last area can be seen in the number of female politicians, which has increased threefold.

In order to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, laws such as the Law on Family, the Law on Combating Domestic violence and the Law on the Rights of the Child and Child protection were enacted in 1994. On 6 March 2013, the President of Mongolia made a pledge to stop domestic violence in our country, which was a major, timely step in the prevention and elimination of all forms of domestic violence against women and girls. At the National High-level Meeting on Population and Development, organized in Mongolia in 2013, following the sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, it approved the Ulaanbaatar Declaration, which became an official document guiding our efforts to implement the ICPD Programme of Action, achieve the MDGs for empowering women and increasing their participation in political, social and economic life, and combat gender-based violence.

We have made significant progress towards the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. However, a number of challenges remain to be addressed. Although progress has been made in the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, we still need to make a greater effort to ensure our achievement of that goal. Changes in population lifestyles require better urban planning and the reduction of urban-rural disparities. We again confirm the commitment of our country to continue the implementation of the ICPD Programme

of Action, as well as actions and recommendations for implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014, and pledge to implement the Programme of Action effectively. We will make every effort to reduce poverty and unemployment, to combat sexually transmitted infections and to decrease adolescent pregnancy, which present the biggest challenges for our country.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Tien, Minister of Health of the Socialist Republic of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Tien (Viet Nam): The Vietnamese delegation expresses its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for the excellent reports submitted to this special session of the General Assembly. We highly appreciate the report on the framework of action (A/69/62) and the index report of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122), noting that the framework is consistent with resolution 65/234 and other approved documents.

In the past 20 years, Viet Nam has made considerable progress in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Together with the socioeconomic development of our country, the health status of the Vietnamese people, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health, has been greatly improved. Between 1990 and 2010, the maternal mortality ratio declined by almost three fourths, and under-five child mortality was reduced by more than 50 per cent. In the 1994-2013 period, the total fertility rate dropped by half, and the contraceptive prevalence rate increased by 13 per cent. Viet Nam is also one of just a few countries around the world on track to achieve Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 by 2015.

In the coming years, besides policies aimed at stimulating socioeconomic growth, sustainable development and social security, the Government of Viet Nam will focus our sustainable development agenda on the following steps. First, it will develop appropriate laws and policies that respond to problems such as population aging, migration, urbanization, the imbalance in the sex ratio at birth, and gender equality. Secondly, it will further strengthen the health-care system to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights, particularly

for those who are from ethnic minorities and rural-to-urban migrants. Thirdly, it will expand and improve the quality of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including the integration of comprehensive sexual education into school curricula, as well as life-skills education.

We believe that the impacts of population dynamics on the micro and macro levels also require strong integration into development planning at the national, regional and international levels and that the development challenges we have been facing in past decades require more systematic participation on the part of all stakeholders in crafting and implementing responses to those challenges, for which partnership and global leadership through the United Nations are critical.

Finally, we should like to take the opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, to the Commission on Population and Development, to the United Nations Population Fund and other development partners that have supported Viet Nam in the area of population and development. We wish us all a very fruitful meeting.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Maxine Pamela Omata McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. McClean (Barbados): The adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was a watershed in the history of human rights, the empowerment of women and the pursuit of sustainable development. For the first time, the overwhelming majority of the world's countries recognized that sustainable development can be achieved only when sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are enjoyed and when women are viewed as equals and are empowered. That landmark document, together with the key actions for further implementation, continues to be the basis for the elaboration of sound and progressive national and international policies on population and development. The continued implementation of the Programme of Action must be prioritized in the post-2015 development agenda.

The impact of the implementation of the Programme of Action in Barbados is clear. Recent decades have witnessed decreasing family size, the increasing participation of women in the formal

workforce, and delayed childbearing. Comprehensive, quality sexual and reproductive health services are provided through our health-care system, free for citizens, and in partnership with non-governmental organizations. The unmet need for contraceptives has been reduced in the general population, and legislation allows for the safe termination of pregnancies. The maternal death rate stands at 0.8 per thousand live births. Aggressive programmes aimed at reducing teen pregnancy are being implemented in coordination with a non-governmental organization, the Barbados Family Planning Association.

Our comprehensive, multisectoral HIV/AIDS programme is evidence-informed, gender-sensitive and human rights-based, and addresses prevention, treatment, care and support. Anti-retroviral treatment is provided free of cost at the point of delivery to citizens. More than 80 per cent of those needing anti-retroviral treatment receive it. AIDS mortality rates have declined sharply and are being maintained at less than 5 per cent. The rate of mother-to-child transmission has been maintained at 2 per cent or less for the past 10 years.

Barbados reaffirms its commitment to women's full enjoyment of their human rights. We recognize that, despite remarkable national advances in the status of women, the empowerment of women is an issue to which we must always devote attention. Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is a scourge that we are fighting. We will continue to work with men, women, girls and boys in efforts to encourage positive social norms and to engage men and boys as agents of change.

The Programme of Action stressed the critical role of international cooperation in achieving sustainable social and economic development. For developing countries, international cooperation is indispensable. In particular, Barbados highlights the continued urgent need to strengthen our national statistical capacity, a critical component in creating, monitoring and evaluating policy. Barbados joins the global community in reaffirming, once again, its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Li Bin, Minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission of the People's Republic of China.

Ms. Li Bin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's report on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (A/69/62), and we support the statement made by the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In the view of the Chinese Government, the issue of population is ultimately a development issue. Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, the Chinese Government, based on its national conditions, has taken an integrated approach in addressing the quantity, quality, structure and distribution of the population. We have implemented family-planning programmes that effectively control our excessive population growth. As a result, economic and social development has been advanced, and people's livelihoods have remarkably improved. The life expectancy of the Chinese people has been raised from 69 years at the beginning of the 1990s to the current 75, and we have realized the Millennium Development Goals target on under-5 mortality ahead of schedule.

Compared with 20 years ago, China's population and economic and social development have undergone tremendous changes, and the relationship between economic and social development and the population factor have come ever closer. In view of that, the Chinese Government will continue to implement the spirit and principles of the ICPD Programme of Action, work to acquire a deep understanding of the situation, dynamics and characteristics of our current population development, and maintain an integrated approach to decision-making on population and development. We will give full play to the role of various sectors of society, especially social organizations.

We will continue to follow our fundamental family-planning policy and gradually adjust and improve our reproductive policy with a view to turning the burden of a large population into human capital dividends. We will provide services for rural women, especially for the screening of breast cancer. We will speed up the drive towards equitable access to basic public services by migrants; enhance the capacity of families for development; improve our social security system; actively respond to the ageing of our population; and create a conducive environment for the long-term balanced development of our population and for building a relatively well-off society.

With regard to further implementation of the framework of actions for the follow-up to the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014, I would like to make the following points. First, we should further review the new problems and new challenges in the area of population and development. Secondly, we should continue to uphold the purposes and principles of the Programme of Action, and incorporate the issue of population into the overall plan for economic and social development. Thirdly, we should keep increasing investment in reproductive health and family planning, and enable everyone to have access to reproductive health and family-planning services. Fourthly, we should work together to include the issue of population in the post-2015 development agenda, and provide more support to developing countries.

As always, the Chinese Government will promote international exchanges and cooperation in the area of population and development, including South-South cooperation, and make further and greater contributions to the building of our common home and the realization of the future we want. Public health has a direct bearing on everyone. There is now an Ebola outbreak in West Africa that is endangering people's health. The Chinese Government will continue to support the countries concerned in combating that epidemic. Last but not least, I would like to express our thanks to the United Nations Population Fund for their continued help and contribution.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Aziz (Pakistan): We commend the role of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in promoting the goals of the Commission on Population and Development. Our partnership with UNFPA dates back to 1971. Together, we have successfully completed seven country programmes. We commend UNFPA for its technical and financial support, and also acknowledge the role of civil society organizations as valued partners.

With an estimated 188 million inhabitants, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. Growing at a rate of around 1.95 per cent, Pakistan's population could exceed 300 million by 2050 to become the fifth most populous country in the

world. For a resource-scarce country like Pakistan, that population explosion has serious implications for the Government's efforts to improve the standard of living and provide the basic amenities of life to all sections of the society. Demographic planning has remained a priority for Pakistan. Pakistan pioneered the launch of the population programme in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation region, and successive Governments have focused resources on raising awareness, providing health care, building capacity and forging alliances for effective implementation of the population-control strategies.

A national reproductive health package was adopted in 2001 to offer family-planning services within the comprehensive framework of reproductive health. An explicit national population policy was announced in 2002. Nation-wide help lines have been established for providing counselling to married people. Population and health-related contents have been incorporated into textbooks. Legislation has been enacted to protect and empower women in the social, economic and political spheres.

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, Pakistan has made significant progress in demographic planning and public health, of which I would highlight the following. First, the contraceptive prevalence rate has trebled from 11.8 per cent in 1990 to 35 per cent in 2013. Secondly, the total fertility rate has decreased from 5.3 in 1990 to 3.8 in 2013. Thirdly, the maternal mortality rate has dropped from 490 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 276 in 2007 during that period. Fourthly, the population growth rate has decreased from 2.6 per cent in 1998 to 1.95 per cent in 2013.

Administrative control of the population programme was transferred to the provinces in 2003. Subsequently, the project as a whole was devolved to the provinces for greater efficiency and involvement of the local populations. At the federal level, the Ministry of National Health Services and Regulation leads interprovincial coordination and cooperation at the international level. Despite those achievements, population control remains a major challenge. There is still an unmet need of at least 20 per cent for family-planning services, and there are large variations in access to services between rural and urban populations, rich and the poor. The present Government is aware of those challenges and of the need for a comprehensive response at all levels.

In the context of the theme of the special session, namely, "Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014," Pakistan wishes to state the following. First, we are committed to completing the unfinished agenda with regard to our attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, especially reducing maternal mortality and achieving universal access to reproductive health services. Secondly, we are determined to achieve the commitments made by Pakistan under the Family Planning 2020 partnership to reduce unmet needs and increase our contraceptive prevalence rate to at least 55 per cent by 2020. Thirdly, we are committed to ensuring women's access to reproductive health services, in line with Pakistan's constitutional and international commitments. And fourthly, we are committed to addressing the reproductive and maternal health needs of communities affected by natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Pakistan's enduring commitment to the historic ICPD Programme of Action and the vision presented in the Secretary-General's report (A/69/62). Pakistan also supports the prominent inclusion of population planning and welfare issues in the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luis Almagro, Minister for Foreign Relations of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Almagro (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which established forward-looking goals in 1994. In that regard, we have worked to eliminate inequality gaps in the promotion and protection of human rights, with special emphasis on vulnerable populations and those whose human rights have been violated.

Uruguay is deeply committed to the reduction of poverty and the elimination of extreme poverty, as well as to achieving greater economic and social equity and a society that is as inclusive and cohesive as possible, with an emphasis on President José Mujica's strategy for citizens' security and cooperative living. We have reduced poverty by two thirds since 2004, with the poverty rate falling from 39.9 per cent to 12.4 per cent, and extreme poverty from 4.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent. In order to deal with our social inequality, we have

established a national social emergency and income plan aimed at assisting our population living in extreme poverty, at helping schoolchildren, and at monitoring health. Our equity plan has promoted universal access to social and income assistance, restructuring our social safety net.

Infant mortality has been reduced from 12.2 to 8.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. In order to achieve that, we strengthened health coverage in priority population sectors, such as children, adolescents and pregnant women, of which the Government's Uruguay Crece Contigo programme, which is producing excellent results, is an example. The comprehensiveness of our sexual and reproductive health services, which in our country range from voluntary abortion to assisted fertility treatment, from quality universal contraception to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, has enabled Uruguay to meet Millennium Development Goal 5 on reducing maternal mortality by two thirds.

With the passing of our laws on marriage equality and civil partnerships, we have legalized cohabitation and marriage between people of the same sex, regardless of their identity and sexual orientation or preference. Uruguay has also improved its protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and its promotion of ethnic and racial equality through laws and programmes aimed at achieving a more inclusive society, particularly for our African and indigenous populations. Uruguay continues to encourage gender equality and the empowerment of women, promoting gender mainstreaming across the board in all its public policies and in political participation and State Government. Through our new law on migration and the regulations that it institutes, we have implemented policies facilitating the return of Uruguayans living abroad.

With regard to our efforts to deepen our commitment to international instruments, I should mention the first meeting in October 2013 of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, at which we adopted the historic Montevideo Consensus. That agreement goes beyond the Cairo Programme of Action in recognizing sexual rights, respect for sexual orientation and gender identity, comprehensive sex education, the importance of sexual and reproductive health services, including all the issues associated with the life and health of men,

women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Particularly important is the inclusion in health systems of services for women dealing with unwanted pregnancies, even where that is illegal, since it is a State's duty to give full support to efforts to reduce maternal mortality and to provide services within a framework that emphasizes equality and protection, as well as the full protection of the human rights of all, without discrimination. Uruguay also chaired the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, which adopted by consensus its resolution 2014/1, reaffirming the principles of the Cairo Programme of Action and including a new commitment to continuing to place reproductive rights and the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls at the centre of population and development policies.

Our country's chairmanship of both the Montevideo Consensus and the Commission on Population and Development have put Uruguay in an excellent position to help further our definition of the post-2015 agenda and the strengthening of public policies from the point of view of human rights, where the population and their rights form the central focus of the sustainable development of our peoples. In that regard, we support the report of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970) and the objectives and goals that it outlines. Despite the challenge they represent for us all, they will motivate us to continue working on broadening our achievements and intensifying our continuing fight for equality, respect for human rights and social justice. The President can continue to rely on our support in all of this.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Urmas Paet, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Paet (Estonia): The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo 20 years ago marked an important milestone in promoting and protecting the human rights of all. The ICPD agenda significantly changed the way we approach the relationships between population, human rights, sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

Much has been accomplished, and many lives have been improved through the implementation of the ICPD agenda since 1994, as well as through the Millennium Development Goals. The ICPD agenda has formed a

solid base for various programmes and joint projects aimed at empowering women and girls, fighting sexual crimes and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights as part of human rights.

However, many people continue to live in a context of inequality and without the full realization of their human rights. Too many women and young people, especially in marginalized communities, are still left out of the ICPD promise. The goals of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls, gender equality, women's empowerment and equal access to education for girls still appear elusive. Protecting human rights, investing in health and education, advancing gender equality and empowering women are the only ways to expand opportunities for all. We must acknowledge that we cannot achieve sustainable development without achieving those goals first.

Estonia actively promotes women's rights and gender equality and education, and we greatly value women and girls' empowerment, the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, and sexual and reproductive health. Since 2010, Estonia has funded several projects and international activities aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as at fighting sexual violence, including various projects related to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), to the tune of more than €1.65 million.

During the past three years, the amount of our financial allocations has increased by at least 10-15 per cent annually. This year Estonia has funded several development aid projects that focus on the educational needs of women and girls. In the coming years two Estonian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will carry out projects in Afghanistan to raise the quality of health-care education. In Yemen, we have started a programme that aims to decrease the number of child marriages of girls from illiterate families. In Kyrgyzstan, an Estonian NGO is working on raising awareness of reproductive health. Those are a few examples of how we are focusing on implementing the ICPD agenda.

The principles and objectives of the ICPD agenda should be the cornerstones of an effective post-2015 development agenda aimed at addressing the urgent challenges of poverty eradication, human rights and sustainable development for all. By committing ourselves, we will be able to meet the challenges. Let

us continuously work on the targets set 20 years ago in Cairo.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): This convening of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session marks the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). That landmark Conference in 1994 and its Programme of Action, which provided a positive challenge to all countries to successfully implement its goals, has reserved a place of special consideration for population issues. In an era of shadows with respect to pivotal people-related issues, it ensured that population would forever thereafter move from merely counting people to ensuring that every person counts. That is an enterprise to which we remain fully committed today.

The ICPD Programme of Action provided the foundation and framework of a people-centred approach to the issues of population and development. It articulated that individual human rights and dignity were necessary preconditions for sustainable development. The achievements at the global level over the ensuing 20 years have been remarkable. They include gains in poverty eradication, women's equality, population health and life expectancy, educational attainment and human rights protection systems.

For its part, Guyana has pursued the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action with great ardour. It has substantially informed our advocacy for and pursuit of people-centred development. We have accorded the highest priority to the eradication of poverty and to building an inclusive society by addressing all forms of inequality and exclusion. Significant investment has also been made in expanding and enhancing the delivery of social protection and health-care services, including primary health care.

The Government of Guyana has placed special emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women by providing equal opportunities for women and girls so that they can contribute to all sectors of national development. We continue to address the particular needs of youth, older persons, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, who are often more exposed to abuse and discrimination.

We are justifiably proud of the gains that we have made in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action in Guyana, especially given the significant resource and capacity constraints that we often face. That progress has been undergirded by considerable engagement with multiple actors at all levels. As the demands of implementation go beyond the capacity of any country acting alone, Guyana values those partnerships and highly values the support of our development partners and the United Nations system, including the United Nations Population Fund.

While we have come a long way in realising the ICPD goals, it has not been without challenges, and much remains to be done. Increased investment is crucial so as to build young people's capabilities and equip them with the skills needed to meet current labour demands. Early and life-long learning for our children, adolescents and young people and the relevance of their education are important for nation-building.

As is the case for many other developing countries, external migration, with its impacts and opportunities, poses a serious dilemma for Guyana. We have experienced at first hand the realities of the complex interrelationship between international migration and development. We continue to explore appropriate initiatives to facilitate brain-circulation, including through the active contribution by the diaspora to our national development.

In the course of those 20 years, the threats to inclusive and sustainable development, including to our environment and our common future, have increased in scope and severity. Critical gaps in implementation remain. We concur with the clear perspective that an understanding of the implications of population dynamics as a foundation and prerequisite for sustainable development is central. Accordingly, the central vision and message of the ICPD bear even greater relevance today and must continue to animate our endeavours in elaborating a new development agenda.

Guyana therefore reaffirms and renews its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action and its review outcome. Leadership and innovation are required to progress along the path to sustainability outlined in the present framework. Issues critical to enabling all persons to contribute to and benefit from development in a more equal and sustainable world must be addressed.

Our review has made clear what has worked and has clarified urgent imperatives in that new context for a systematic, comprehensive and integrated approach to population issues. That approach includes a greater focus on monitoring progress and achievements with respect to ICPD-related goals. For the seven billion people of our world and succeeding generations, let us not fall short in doing all that is required to assure the success of that agenda in the future.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Dato' Sri Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development of Malaysia.

Mrs. Rohani (Malaysia): On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I would like to express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund and Member States for their comprehensive report on the assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Malaysia shares the view that the current state of the world's population is one of unprecedented diversity and change, reflected in new patterns of fertility, mortality, migration, urbanization and ageing. The continuation and consequences of those population trends will present both opportunities and challenges for the formulation and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

I am pleased to report that Malaysia has achieved most of the objectives and goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). New policies and programmes are being implemented to respond to the changing socioeconomic conditions and emerging challenges for Malaysia to become a high-income, developed nation by 2020. Key enabling factors — such as our political stability, an efficient civil service, a harmonious social environment, unity and strength in diversity, an educated and trained workforce, abundant natural resources and effective partnerships with stakeholders and non-governmental organizations — have contributed to our success in achieving the ICPD Programme of Action and other development goals. That has resulted in significant poverty reduction, more balanced economic participation and wider coverage of essential services nationwide, such as health care and education.

Poverty eradication programmes have been highly effective in reducing the incidence of poverty from 8.7 per cent in 1994 to 1.7 per cent in 2012. During the same period, the incidence of hard-core poverty decreased from 2 per cent to 0.2 per cent. The reduction in the rate was due to inclusive poverty-eradication initiatives, which aimed to improve immediate welfare as well as to provide income-earning opportunities to ensure sustainability.

With regard to education, the enrolment rate for primary education increased from 95.05 per cent in 2001 to 96.59 per cent in 2013, while the enrolment rate for secondary education rose from 85.85 per cent in 2001 to 91.12 per cent in 2013. The Government of Malaysia has given special attention to education for women. That is evident in the enrolment of women for first degrees in public universities, which was consistently above 62 per cent from 2009 to 2012. I am also pleased to report that of 41,573 new students for first degrees in the 2013-2014 academic year in public universities, 68.02 per cent are female.

The Government of Malaysia has set out a plan to increase women's participation rate in the workforce to 55 per cent by the year 2015. Due to our efforts, the participation rate of women in the workforce increased from 46.8 per cent in 2010 to 49.5 per cent in 2012 and to 52.4 per cent in 2013. With better-educated women entering the workforce, Malaysia has achieved the policy of at least 30 per cent of decision-making positions in the public sector being filled by women. Proactive implementation of that policy has seen the percentage of women holding decision-making positions in the public sector increase from 18.8 per cent in 2004 to 33.7 per cent in 2013. The same target was set in 2011 for women at decision-making levels in the corporate sector. Following the implementation of that policy, women's representation in the boards of directors of Government investment companies increased from 14 per cent in 2012 to 15.34 per cent in January 2014.

Due to its excellent health system, Malaysia has one of the lowest mortality rates among developing countries, which was 4.6 deaths per thousand population in 2012, compared to 4.7 deaths per thousand in 2011. In 2013, average life expectancy at birth was 72.6 years for males and 77.2 for females, compared to 70 years for males and 74.7 for females in 2000.

In Malaysia, the number of reported HIV cases has declined steadily. However, while the epidemic

was initially dominated by transmission through drugs users, there has been a rise in HIV cases attributed to heterosexual intercourse, and that phenomenon is prevalent among the younger population, aged 15 to 24. To address new challenges, Malaysia has formulated the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2011-2015. That plan incorporates a multisectoral strategy that takes into account young people's vulnerability. It provides free first-line treatment for all patients at Government hospitals and clinics, provides reproductive health education and services and encourages HIV testing through voluntary testing and counselling.

With regard to reproductive cancers, Malaysia is one of the first countries in Asia to introduce a national human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination programme to prevent cervical cancer. In 2010, \$3.2 million was allocated to implement the vaccination programme for schoolgirls at 13 years of age. From its inception in 2010 through May 2013, a total of 672,970 schoolgirls benefitted from the programme. In addition, another HPV vaccination programme has been introduced for 18-year-old women who missed the national HPV vaccination programme. The programme for the catch-up group was implemented through an allocation of \$15.7 million in 2012 and \$3.2 million in 2014. The Government of Malaysia has adopted various approaches to address issues related to the reproductive health of adolescents. The introduction of the national policy on reproductive health and social education and its action plan in November 2009 paved the way for greater access to reproductive health education, information and services for adolescents and youths.

Despite the achievement of almost all ICPD objectives, we are constantly assessing changing socioeconomic conditions, such as the ageing population and the decline in fertility. Malaysia's total fertility rate declined from 2.9 per cent in 2000 to 2.2 per cent in 2006 and to 2.1 per cent in 2012. The decline in the fertility level will have profound effects on the size and composition of the nation's population. That will result in a significant age-structure shift and population ageing that will determine the future labour supply. In addition, in 2013 Malaysia's older persons were 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country. By 2030, Malaysia will be in the category of ageing nations, with older persons constituting more than 15 per cent of the population. Ageing can be considered from both health and socioeconomic perspectives. Hence, comprehensive policies, programmes and services

to ensure the well-being of older persons should be initiated and implemented.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that Malaysia will give its full support to all deliberations of this special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, may I remind the delegations that we still have 50 speakers left and encourage them to respect the time limit.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Andres Navarro García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Navarro (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to express our gratitude for this opportunity to share some ideas and observations with the Assembly. I would also like to convey to the Secretary-General our recognition of his leadership of the United Nations.

We wish to record our satisfaction with the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62) on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 and the index report for the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122). Similarly, we welcome the outcomes of the Montevideo Consensus, which will contribute to our formulation of the best national and regional road maps for following up on the commitments in the Cairo Programme of Action beyond 2014.

The adoption of the Cairo Programme of Action in 1994 expanded the human rights framework in the Dominican Republic, influenced public policies and helped raise citizens' awareness in matters relating to human development. Its influence is appreciable, especially in the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, which was reformed in 2010, and the vision for 2030 of our national development strategy.

To tell the truth, if anything has been accomplished by this Government of the Dominican Republic, it is exactly the idea of putting persons at the centre of all public policies, a concept that has been widely shared in this forum. While there are still problems and challenges to be overcome, the Dominican Republic can point to significant progress with that new approach.

In that regard, we would like to highlight the progress made in improving people's general living conditions, reflected in our human development index, which has risen from 0.60 in 1994 to 0.70 in 2013, representing a 10 per cent rate of improvement during the period covered by the Cairo Programme of Action.

And that is only the beginning, because we are committed to investing in our people. Thirty-eight out of every 100 Dominicans are between 10 and 29 years old, and we must do everything we can to enable the country to take advantage of the great development asset that our demographic dividend represents.

However, I would like to emphasize our doubts about the methodology for measuring poverty, under which the Dominican Republic is classified as an upper-middle-income country. The reality, however, is that approximately one third of our population live in unacceptable conditions. Measuring poverty on the basis of incomes is questionable, as is defining poverty for families as living on less than \$2 a day and extreme poverty as less than \$1.50 a day. In both cases, based on purchasing power, a matter of a few pennies marks the boundary between poverty and extreme poverty, between bare survival and starvation. The optimism of the numbers on reducing poverty around the world, based on those parameters, clashes with the widespread perception among the people that the economic growth figures, no matter how positive they seem, are directly at odds with their expectations and real living conditions.

The Dominican Government and society are firmly committed to eradicating poverty, whatever it may be, and the cycles of exclusion and inequality. That is why we are working to achieve a society with universal access to health and education. The fact is that in the past two years we have made major strides towards ensuring universal and free access to quality health care, an inalienable right for all. One fundamental goal in that regard is reducing maternal and infant mortality. To that end, we are investing heavily in improving obstetric and gynaecology units across the country. We can say that today almost all registered births occur in hospitals. In this Government's first year, the result was a reduction in infant and maternal mortality of 18 and 4 per cent, respectively. In our second year, the trend has accelerated, with a reduction of 24 per cent in infant mortality and 12 per cent for maternal mortality.

We are aware, however, that we have a lot of work to do in the area of teenage pregnancy. To that end, in collaboration with the Inter-American Development

Bank, we recently launched a programme designed to address overall adolescent health, with an emphasis on reducing pregnancy and maternal mortality. That is an example of how international cooperation can help advance the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development.

Another example is the joint initiative with the European Union that we have launched, starting this month, to help our neighbour the Republic of Haiti. Thanks to the European cooperation, three hospitals will be built in the areas of Haiti closest to our border to provide attention to particularly vulnerable sectors of the population. They will concentrate on providing obstetrical, internal medicine, surgical and pediatric services. The health centres' construction will benefit both Haitian patients, who will not have to cross the border in search of such services, and Haitian health-care personnel, who can then pursue their specialties in their own country. International cooperation in such areas, however, is increasingly constrained by the same inadequate classification I referred to earlier, and which conceals people's real situations.

We firmly believe that education is one of the best ways to improve people's self-esteem and ability to realize their potential, especially for young people. Dominican society recently signed a national pact for quality education that is also a pact for young people and their development, in line with the aims of the Cairo Programme of Action. Our goal is to guarantee to all Dominican children and young people the right to a quality education through the implementation of inclusive public policies such as an extended school day and universal school meals. The Government has also launched the Quisqueya Empieza Contigo initiative — "Your country begins with you" — designed to give early-childhood education and protection in our country an unprecedented boost. Our goal is for thousands of children to be able to break the cycle of poverty that from their earliest years condemns them to malnutrition and deficiencies of all kinds. We have initiated a broad plan for building preschools and community centres to ensure that our small children are protected and cared for from the start, along with support for families in raising them.

From Cairo to today, our country has seen been notable advances in respecting women and recognizing their rights, achievements in gender equality and access to education at all levels, and a significant improvement in equal employment opportunities for women.

However, many pending issues remain, which we are working on. They include the eradication of gender-based violence, a shameful scourge to which only one response — zero tolerance — is possible.

That is our brief summary of the achievements our country has made to date on the Cairo agenda, which is also our own. It is an agenda that puts people and their needs first and places politics and the economy at the service of people, and never the other way around. There can be no doubt that we will continue to work tirelessly to guarantee the rights of our population, improve their quality of life and achieve development based on respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

The Acting President: Yet again, may I remind delegations to respect the time limit, which is three minutes, as we have many more speakers remaining.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Lynne Yelich, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Canada.

Ms. Yelich (Canada): I thank the President for this opportunity to address the General Assembly. I am pleased to be here to mark the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action.

The Cairo Programme of Action marked a time when we were able to debate — and more importantly, compromise — to find areas or action that we could all agree to advance. It was a time when we agreed to address population and development issues in a holistic way that put the well-being of the individual at the centre. That is what underlies our work as a collective body: the recognition of the fundamental importance of every human life and the inherent rights embodied within that life. For Canada, that is why maternal, newborn and child health is our top development priority.

Earlier this spring, Canada's Prime Minister convened the Saving Every Woman, Every Child summit in Toronto, which brought together world leaders, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to reaffirm our commitment to ending the tragedy of women and children dying from preventable diseases. That is also why Canada has committed an additional \$3.5 billion through 2020 to support those efforts.

Within that context, Canada has built consensus around civil registration and vital statistics as the foundation for accountability in aid. Those systems are crucial to advancing maternal, newborn and child

health because they provide the measure against which progress can be tracked, and they are foundational for informing policy on what is required to go the final mile. Civil registration also provides children with a legal identity, which helps them to access services such as health care and education, protects them from exploitation and abuse and, later in life, enables them to be part of the formal economy. We believe that robust, effective systems for civil registration and vital statistics will help us achieve a transformative change across the sustainable development agenda.

Let me conclude by noting that the directions set forward at the International Conference on Population and Development still resonate today. The themes of the Cairo Programme of Action will be reflected in Canada's efforts to ensure that women and children are at the core of the post-2015 development agenda.

This spring, we watched with concern at the Commission on Population and Development as some delegations hijacked the conference by focusing discussions on a few contentious topics on which there was no reasonable hope for compromise. Canada's position has consistently been in support of the Cairo Programme of Action. The initial compromise from all sides ensured that we could work together on what we agreed on rather than accomplish nothing in our disagreement. That is Canada's priority in the negotiations on maternal, newborn and child health. There should be no topic that is less divisive. It is simply a matter of building political momentum to finish the effort.

Delegations here have a choice whether to monopolize our time with a few topics that divide us, both internationally and at home, or to focus on less controversial and more constructive dialogue. Canada is a willing partner in efforts to advance maternal, newborn and child goals. We have it within our power and ability to advance the interests of women and children now who are dying from preventable diseases. Will the Assembly join us in this effort?

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Dunya Maumoon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Maldives.

Ms. Maumoon (Maldives): I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the States represented here today who believed in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Today we can look back on

our work with pride and know that we have contributed to improving the lives of our people and of our global community of nations.

I wish to commend the President of the General Assembly for convening this historic special session on population and development. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts and leadership and to welcome his report on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD beyond 2014 (A/69/62).

The Maldives is a development success story. In the 1980s, the Maldives ranked among the world's 20 poorest nations. Now, it is a middle-income country — the third country to graduate from the United Nations list of least developed countries — with a gross domestic product of over \$6,000 per capita in 2013. Maternal mortality rates that stood at 500 per 100,000 live births in 1990 came down to 13 per 100,000 live births in 2012, while the infant mortality rate dropped from 34 per 1,000 live births to 9 per 1,000 live births in the same period. The literacy rate in the Maldives has consistently remained over 98 per cent for the past 30 years. Under the 2008 Employment Act, we have guaranteed maternity leave for working mothers with three months full pay. The Maldives has always provided equal pay for equal work. We have fully achieved five of the eight Millennium Development Goals and are on track for achieving the remaining three Goals.

Yet the Maldives story is far from complete. Major challenges remain. While emerging issues are becoming more prominent, old challenges persist. Equal income distribution has always been a constant challenge. While Maldivian women are among the most emancipated in South Asia, with unhindered access to employment, education, health care and social mobility, they have limited opportunity for economic empowerment, and gender-based violence remains a challenge.

The Government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on violence against women. The Government is also in the process of enacting the Gender Equality Law, which will establish a legal framework that addresses all forms of discrimination against women. A comprehensive national reproductive health strategy has been formulated to provide access to timely, adequate and quality reproductive health care. Furthermore, knowledge of HIV and sexually transmitted infections needs to be strengthened and healthy and responsible behaviours encouraged.

Catering to the youth of the country is a major policy priority for the Government. Children and youth account for 44 per cent of the population of the Maldives. Unemployment, which gives rise to a wide range of challenges such as drug abuse and delinquency, is a grave concern for the public and for the Government of the President, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. Major projects have been announced, such as building a youth city, which is set to become a major hub for employment and innovation, and practical work is under way for its realization.

The Maldives has a track record of formulating policies based on statistical evidence. Two days ago, a national census was launched, despite a lapse of eight years since the last census was held, in 2006. Once again, the national census will play a central role in understanding the real and current picture of the national population, its trends and other parameters. Setting a new precedent, data and statistics on the migrant population will also be collected in the new census, enabling the Government to take further measures to protect and serve the interests of migrant workers, who, some estimates indicate, make up more than one third of the local population.

The Maldives believes that, for sustainable development to be realized, a global population that can be sustained, within the ecological limits of the planet, that enjoys basic human rights and dignity and that experiences socioeconomic well-being is essential. In that regard, we call for the inclusion of the Secretary-General's report and the regional review outcomes in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

A nation's most precious resource is its human resource — its citizens — especially for a country as small as the Maldives, with limited natural assets. Without human development, sustainable development is entirely beyond reach. As we begin to write the next era of the Maldives story, we remain fully committed to the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We remain committed to our people, especially our youth and women, and to the full realization of their potential.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Hillevi Engström, Minister for International Development Cooperation of Sweden.

Ms. Engström (Sweden): Sweden aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

It was 20 years ago at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo that 179 countries agreed on an agenda that changed the way we look at families and capitals. We agreed that children have the right to a childhood. Young girls should not bear children themselves or be forced to marry. We agreed that this is a question of human rights. That remarkable agreement has led to some amazing results, but we must reaffirm the objectives. We therefore welcome the findings of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 Review process, including the *ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report* and the Secretary-General's index report (A/69/122). The Cairo Programme of Action should be incorporated into the Secretary-General's synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda.

Sweden is very much concerned by violations of women's and girls' rights, which continue to plague our planet. About 800 women still die in pregnancy and childbirth every day. With access to contraception, safe delivery and safe and legal abortion, that could be prevented. Think about that: 800 women die every day — someone's wife, mother, daughter, sister or friend. Those deaths could be avoided. One in three women in the world has experienced physical and or sexual abuse. As many as 125 million women live with the consequences of female genital mutilation. Just imagine if it were 125 million men being cut. All of that points to one fact: women are systematically discriminated against in every society in the world. That is of course unacceptable. When will we learn that there can be no sustainable development without the active participation of 50 per cent of the population?

Lastspring, 260 parliamentarians from 134 countries adopted the Stockholm Statement of Commitment. Those parliamentarians promised, among other things, to respect and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all individuals — heterosexual people as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. They promised to promote and protect human rights, to eliminate discrimination without distinctions of any kind and to institute a minimum legal age of 18 years for marriage. As we speak, those parliamentarians are introducing legislation in their countries.

The post-2015 agenda must have gender equality as a stand-alone goal, and a gender perspective integrated throughout the agenda. We must also establish specific targets to guarantee sexual reproductive health and rights. We must put emphasis on the word

“rights” — ultimately, the right to choose a sexual partner and whom to marry and the right to one’s own body. It is a question of human rights. Specifically I mean the following rights: the right to information, including universal access to comprehensive sexuality education; the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including the right to decide freely when and how many children to have or not to have; access to contraception and access to safe and legal abortion; universal access to safe delivery; and the right to make the decisions regarding one’s own body and sexuality, including the right to decide if and when to marry and with whom, regardless of sexual orientation; as well as the right to decide if and when to engage in sex and with whom.

We need a new global consensus for ICPD beyond 2014. We must include sexual and reproductive health as rights for all for the benefit of all people and all societies.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Cecilia Vaca Jones, Minister for Social Development of Ecuador.

Ms. Vaca Jones (Ecuador) (spoke in Spanish): It has been 20 years since we adopted the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, and clearly many things have changed. Nevertheless, inequity and poverty are still outstanding issues worldwide. For the Republic of Ecuador, the Constitution of 2008 was a historic milestone, as it reflects the sovereign will of the Ecuadorian people to transform and rebuild the country’s juridical, political and economic structures and sets out a development system based on rights, justice and *sumak kawsay*, or living well. It strengthens Ecuador as a constitutional State, based on rights and justice, a State that is social, democratic, sovereign, independent, unitary, intercultural, plurinational and secular.

This social and political pact has enabled us to achieve significant progress in social development areas, such as the reduction of extreme poverty to 8 per cent in June 2014, and we are firmly committed to eradicating poverty by 2017. We have expanded the population covered by social security by more than 20 per cent and will make every effort to make it universal. Basic education is already universal, and the net secondary school enrolment has reached 91.8 per cent. In addition, we have also democratized access to higher education by providing free access to schools as well

as Government grants. In the past seven years, we have almost tripled the percentage of the gross domestic product allocated to health, achieving universal access to health services and focusing on promotion and prevention.

Moreover, Ecuador is implementing a strategy for a national intersectoral programme for family planning and the prevention of pregnancy among adolescents, which covers education, health and inclusion from a holistic perspective. It provides planning methods that are free, universal and confidential, while respecting sexual and reproductive health rights.

Thirty-nine per cent of the representatives in our National Assembly are women. For the first time in our history, we have a female President. We have reduced the wage gap between men and women by 12 percentage points, and have classified femicide as a crime. In order to ensure participation and governance, we have established five national agendas, which deal with gender equality, disability, human mobility, intergenerational relations, and peoples and nationalities.

Those achievements are the result of a strong political will and of the convergence of a sound public, social and economic policy. Above all, however, they are the result of our ideological principle that we should focus on human beings rather than on capital, and on generating opportunities and skills from early childhood. Perhaps the greatest challenge we face as a country and as human beings is to put more heart into those ideological principles.

We also have major challenges before us. We should eradicate malnutrition in children and among the entire population; improve employment opportunities for young people; achieve universal, free and quality health care and education; reduce teenage pregnancies and always promote comprehensive life plans; reduce gender inequality in the distribution and remuneration of both paid work and unpaid household work; eradicate racial discrimination; eradicate violence and the lack of access to services for priority groups; and foster the protection of the rights of migrants. That is the focus of our agenda for the years to come.

We, Member States, are responsible for the political decisions that we take in order to put an end to those intolerable facts. The world order is not only unjust, it is also immoral, and we have to change it.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Michel Blokland, Minister of Health of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Blokland (Suriname): I am honoured to participate in the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session as we reflect on the past 20 years following the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

We welcome and endorse the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014” (A/69/22), as well as the index report, entitled “Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development” (A/69/122). We support the continued prioritization of sexual and reproductive health in the report and a people-centred approach for the post-2015 development agenda.

Today more than ever, the principles agreed to at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 remain particularly relevant — in particular the principle that we should apply a human rights and gender-based approach when we continue to invest in human capital, equity and dignity throughout the course of life. That is the foundation of sustained economic growth and sustainable development for everyone, including adolescents, women, men, children, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

The *ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report* indicates that, despite remarkable achievements in some areas, many challenges remain, including new and emerging ones. Moreover, the ongoing global crisis severely hampers the ability of States to sustain the gains that they have so painstakingly made over the years. This special session therefore comes at an opportune time for the international community, as we are in the process of elaborating the development framework that will guide the development discourse at the global and national levels for the next 15 years.

It is crucial that we agree on an ambitious future development framework that is inclusive and has people at the centre of development. The future development agenda should address inequality and ensure that no one is left behind. It should be all-inclusive and address

discrimination of all kinds, such as that based on, age, sex, race, ethnicity, origin, migratory status, religion, economic or any other status.

I wish to note that our national survey for ICPD Beyond 2014 was conducted with the participation of representatives from a wide cross section of our society. In my address to the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development a few months ago, I shared with the international community the progress achieved in Suriname. Guided by our national development plan and specific national policies in the areas of youth, sexual and reproductive health, safe motherhood, HIV and AIDS, adolescent health and non-communicable diseases, we have developed and implemented successful programmes for adolescents, mothers and children, people in the interior and the most-at-risk populations.

Furthermore, we are guided by the provisions of our Constitution, as well as those of all the major human rights instruments to which we are a party. There are significant achievements with regard to improved access to education and maternal health services, increased knowledge about HIV prevention and access to testing and early treatment, and the availability of anti-retrovirals. The provision of free health care for children up to age 16 and above, as well as the adoption of legislation on violence against women, have also been implemented in our efforts to improve the well-being of the population. Despite such significant gains, we acknowledge that many challenges persist, in particular with regard to equal access to quality education and health care, social protection and the protection of human rights.

The following issues are of particular concern: the high rates of adolescent pregnancies, which put a further strain on young girls as they seek to develop themselves to their fullest potential; the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, with hypertension and obesity presenting major obstacles to the productive capacity of a small developing country; and unacceptable, high rates of violence against women and girls and the consequences of that violence, which further erode gains in gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Notwithstanding the challenges at the national level, the Government remains resolute in its commitment to ensure that all within its territory should benefit from social, economic and environmental programmes, in particular the most excluded marginalized groups

and persons in vulnerable situations. An international enabling environment is crucial for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. In that regard, a true global partnership is required to continue addressing poverty eradication, which has been referred to on many occasions as the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.”

Such a partnership should not only involve Governments; with the support of international and regional organizations, it should also be extended to all sectors of society, including the private sector and civil society.

Mr. Antoine (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We stress the importance of mobilizing domestic resources in our efforts to achieve sustainable development and improve the well-being of our populations. However, we continue to place emphasis on the need for a significant scaling up of resources, including through the fulfilment of all commitments relating to official development assistance. We also express our support for South-South cooperation, as that would provide additional opportunities for the implementation of development policies and programmes.

In conclusion, as we deliberate on renewing our global commitments made at the conclusion of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, we have to be mindful that young people in particular are closely watching us to ensure that we arrive at the appropriate decisions and commitments for them so that they can live and love a life that is free from any form of discrimination, violence and poverty. The Government of Suriname would like to recommit itself to the global commitments made in the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development. We look forward to an advanced post-2015 agenda that will build on subsequent intergovernmental agreements and the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's index report, which are based on the lessons learned, the gaps identified and the recognition that development should be human rights-based and therefore inclusive of all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Oleh Musiy, Minister of Health of Ukraine.

Mr. Musiy (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014” (A/69/62).

Ukraine has made its contribution to the analysis and the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). That analysis shows that over the past 20 years we have been able to achieve significant positive results. Thanks to the implementation of national programmes on family planning and reproductive health, we have seen a significant reduction in maternal and child mortality. We have also seen a significant reduction in the rate of unwanted pregnancies and abortions. We have also achieved a decrease in the rates of infection for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Young people have begun to take better care of their health and to live a more conscientious way of life. We have adopted a law on preventing domestic violence and a State programme on ensuring equal rights and opportunities between men and women.

We are very grateful to our partners from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for their consistent and systemic support for Ukraine's efforts to achieve the goals set by the ICPD. Ukraine would like to express particular thanks for the humanitarian assistance that has been provided to us for the internally displaced persons who have been forced to leave their homes owing to the threat to their security and livelihood posed by the hybrid war being prosecuted against Ukraine by Russia and the terrorists and separatists it supports.

We are certain that the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the ICPD are still relevant. Ukraine believes that the stable development of countries can only be achieved through investment in the individual development of each and every person, as well as the defence of his or her rights and dignity throughout the course of his or her life. We are convinced that development policies should seek to increase well-being and incomes and ensure the health of the people, with particular attention being paid to reproductive health through prevention and quality medical services. No less important to development is access to quality education for life-long learning, as well as real, not just declared, gender equality and a comprehensive response to the problems of ageing.

Given the age structure of its population, Ukraine is one of the oldest States in the world. Population ageing is one of the most significant demographic processes of modern times. It reflects the face of humankind in this century.

I would like to thank UNFPA for assisting us in the development of comprehensive population plans on the basis of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Obviously, we need significant resources to carry out those plans and achieve our goals. We understand that, and we would therefore like to ask donor countries to increase their support for the activities of UNFPA in the area of population ageing, globally and in Ukraine.

I would also like to emphasize that living a full-fledged and healthy life is possible only in conditions of peace. Unfortunately, in the modern world we are witness to many armed conflicts and acts of aggression. Ukraine, a peaceful developing State, has also become hostage to the inferiority complexes of politicians in our aggressive neighbour. They have engaged in direct military intervention and are supporting terrorists. Unfortunately, that is having an impact on our people, some of whom now live in occupied territory.

Such aggression and attempts to seize others' land should be harshly condemned by all international organizations that respect law, human life and dignity. I would like to thank all of those who, in word and in deed, have been supporting Ukraine in this very trying time for us and have been providing us with humanitarian assistance.

Ukraine urges the inclusion of the conclusions and recommendations in the Secretary-General index report (A/69/122) and the results of regional reviews of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action on socioeconomic issues connected with population ageing in the post-2015 global development agenda.

Planet Earth is our shared home. Wars, conflicts and environmental disasters long ago stopped being the problem of a single country. We are living in an era of globalization. If something happens in one State or another, it is of concern to all of us. We must therefore undertake common efforts to achieve peace and security for each and every person on the Earth.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. G.L. Peiris, Minister for External Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Peiris (Sri Lanka): I join other speakers in congratulating the President and the members of the Bureau on their election.

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) has drawn attention to the complex relationships that the activities of humans, communities and countries have — inter alia, with patterns and levels of use of natural resources, economic and social development and waste generation. By doing so, it has recognized that population dynamics are at the centre of the main development challenges of the twenty-first century, especially among the issues in the post-2015 development agenda. The achievements based on the Programme of Action over the past two decades are also remarkable.

Sri Lanka has taken initiatives to adopt the ICPD principles in order to improve the quality of life of its people. The implementation of a reproductive and population policy in 1998 and the adoption of a national maternal and child health policy in 2013 are such direct outcomes. Our National Secretariat for Elders has developed a 10-year action plan in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Our development strategies have been people-centric and socially sustainable. We have exploited cross-cutting synergistic interactions involving health care and basic education, improved water and sanitation and malaria control and integrated rural development, including the building of rural roads so as to create an enabling environment for the rural population, which is almost 80 per cent of our total. We have also integrated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into the national development agenda and are on track to achieve most of the MDGs, while some have already been achieved at the national level.

Among the notable achievements are those relating to equitable primary education, child and maternal mortality, literacy and access to safe drinking water and sanitation. It is significant that those achievements show no gender disparities. Life expectancy in Sri Lanka has increased to 77 years for women. Taking into account the overall positive profile, the 2013 *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme ranked Sri Lanka among the high achievers in human development.

With the change in Sri Lanka's demographic profile and increased life expectancy, we are facing new challenges, namely, an increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), a growing ageing population by 2030 and the need to address the issues facing young people and contain the spread of HIV/AIDS.

We have launched a comprehensive prevention programme throughout the country through the national policy on chronic NCD prevention. Strategies for reducing the major risk factors such as smoking, alcohol abuse, obesity, unhealthy diet and sedentary lifestyle, have also been formulated and implemented.

Sri Lanka reaffirms the importance of the ICPD Programme of Action as a process aimed at ensuring a more equitable and sustainable world for all. We also acknowledge and express our appreciation for the contributions made by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and UNFPA in Sri Lanka, as well as other partner agencies, in facilitating our achievements in human development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Phandu Skelemani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana.

Mr. Skelemani (Botswana): My delegation and I are grateful for the convening of this special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014.

We welcome this opportunity to deliberate on the key issues in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), as well as the outcome document of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, held last April. Botswana believes these issues to be critical for ensuring the sustainability of the post-2015 development agenda.

Botswana was among the 179 United Nations States Members that committed to the Programme of Action adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, which outlines a global consensus on addressing the challenging population and development concerns. It is now 20 years into that commitment, and the time could not be more opportune for us to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the ICPD

Programme of Action, particularly in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the deadline for which is about to expire, and the post-2015 development agenda, on which we will soon begin intergovernmental negotiations.

In that regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General and the index report of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, both of which highlight the centrality of ICPD issues in terms of a transformative, inclusive and sustainable post-2015 development agenda.

Botswana has made considerable progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. In order to achieve positive results over the past 20 years, Botswana recognized the necessity of investing in the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights as an integral element in sustainable national development.

The public health interventions introduced by Botswana following the 1994 Cairo Conference contributed to achieving the objective of the first national population policy, namely, reducing fertility. Fertility levels have declined from 4.7 children per woman in 1990 to 3.4 in 2001, and further down to 2.9 in 2011, thereby surpassing the 2011 target of 3.3 children per woman. The focus of the revised national population policy of 2010 recognized the importance of monitoring the pace of the fertility decline in order to maintain the level above the replacement level.

Botswana's focus has been on increasing access to general health services while also addressing the inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services. In addition, we continue to provide comprehensive sexuality education in schools and to accelerate the integration of sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS services country-wide.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, the Botswana Government is steadfast in its commitment to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and to eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The fight against the HIV and AIDS epidemic has been one of the major population concerns since the 1994 ICPD, as prevalence remained high throughout the 1990s before it stabilized in the 2000s, as a result of the use of anti-retroviral treatment.

However, the cost of anti-retroviral treatment is unsustainable, as it is projected to increase substantially in the next few years. We therefore continue our

engagement with domestic, regional and international partners, in both the public and private spheres, on issues of resource mobilization in order to realize our national target of zero new HIV infections by 2016 and further ending AIDS by 2030.

Botswana has a youthful population structure. According to the 2011 population and housing census, the population aged between 10 to 35 years accounted for 49.3 per cent of our total population, while those aged 10 to 19 years constituted 20.7 per cent. The challenges associated with that youth bulge include ensuring the provision of quality education and skills development that will match the demands in the job market. While there is progress in the provision of quality education, the test lies in creating employment opportunities.

The Government nevertheless recognizes the opportunity that the youth bulge represents to the country's future economic growth and sustainable development. Botswana is therefore engaged in identifying strategies that will enable it to take full advantage of that demographic dividend through further investment in youth-focused strategies, such as promoting access to information and communication technology. Within the education sector, Botswana's focus in the past 20 years has been on increasing access to education and promoting lifelong learning for continuous human development. In that connection, the Human Resource Development Council was established to address the mismatch between skills production and the labour market requirements.

Botswana is aware of the challenges that still remain in the efforts to protect the environment for succeeding generations. Developments in infrastructure and the sustainable utilization of natural capital are among our national development priorities. The impact of population factors on economic growth and development cannot be overemphasized, and it requires the consistent and comprehensive integration of population dynamics into national development planning.

The current state of income and wealth inequality is unsustainable and threatens future economic growth and the cohesion and security of societies. The capacity of people to adapt and innovate in response to changing environmental conditions is also relevant to the discussions that will take place tomorrow at the Climate Summit 2014: Catalyzing Action and the general debate that will follow. We believe that the development challenges we face require the systematic participation of all stakeholders in crafting responses

to those challenges. On the other hand, Botswana's middle-income status has resulted in declining levels of donor support. Going forward, a deliberate effort should be made to galvanize development partner support in order to ensure the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to the ideals of the Cairo Conference and the effective implementation of the new ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014. I hope that the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly will live up to its purpose of allowing countries to pronounce themselves clearly on these very important issues at the highest political level. It is also our keen hope that the aspirations of the ICPD Programme of Action will be fully incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Acting President: I wish to remind speakers of the three-minute time limit; please give consideration to the time.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo, Minister of Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica.

Ms. Oviedo (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): It has been 20 years since the Cairo Conference provided evidence of the link between development and the well-being of populations. The people are, in their diversity, the builders of societies. They ought to be the beneficiaries of their achievements. Nevertheless, the challenges for which the world convened the Conference in 1994 continue to be as relevant today as they were then. The quest for gender equality, access to sexual and reproductive health care and reproductive rights and the effective observance of the rights and the empowerment of women, young people and the elderly are necessary conditions for supportive, sustainable, inclusive development in accord with our times and our aspirations for our societies.

Since 1994, Costa Rica has made significant progress in implementing its commitments under the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. We have approved and adopted laws, policies and institutional mechanisms to address gender equality, combat violence against women, fight HIV/AIDS and defend the rights of children, adolescents and older adults, among other issues. Therefore, in Costa Rican society, we remain

committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in all its dimensions.

For two decades, we have been making sustained efforts to ensure that those laws, public policies, programmes and projects can become true instruments for the effective implementation of the commitments we have made. In that respect, my country has put in place specific guidelines for State actions and practices aimed at achieving that end throughout our national territory. My Government, which assumed power four months ago, is clearly committed to those goals and realizes that much remains to be done in the effort to ensure respect for the human rights of all persons without any kind of discrimination. We therefore reiterate our commitment to the principles and values adopted at the Cairo Conference and ratified through the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, as they reflect the diversity of our nation.

We work relentlessly to combat poverty, inequality and exclusion, which affects one fifth of our national population, in order to achieve sustainable and equitable development and protect our biodiversity and ecosystems, as they are our main wealth, inherited by our people.

We need sex education from childhood. I wish to emphasize that each pregnancy should be wanted and without risk, and the full development of mothers and their children should be ensured. Therefore, we are decisively opposed to inappropriate relations between adults and boys, girls and adolescents.

In addition, we work to defend the territorial rights of indigenous peoples and advocate for the recognition of people of African descent, especially in the Atlantic region of my country, and strive to ensure aging in dignity.

All of those matters require strong State action to ensure that those issues can become a priority for public social investment.

We believe that discussions on the post-2015 development agenda are an appropriate place to renew our national commitment to the principles and rights enunciated in the Cairo Conference and in the Montevideo Consensus, which will enable us to set out on the path to firmly tackle the significant challenges that remain before us.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the His Excellency Mr. Jean-Pascal Labille, Minister for Public

Enterprises and Development Cooperation in Charge of Urban Policy of Belgium.

Mr. Labille (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): On the occasion of the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Belgium would like to reaffirm its firm support for the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD. We would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General for the entire operational review, including the results reflected in the index report (A/69/122) that was introduced today.

Belgium strongly supports the continuation of the Programme of Action beyond 2014, taking into account the challenges that remain. We are particularly concerned about three issues. Firstly, we need an inclusive approach to deal with the continuing inequalities in the achievement of results that encompasses all individuals without discrimination. Secondly, there are numerous gaps where young people are concerned. Investments targeting young people, including good quality education and sexual education, are the most effective investments we can make. Finally, progress in terms sexual and reproductive right and health has been inadequate. The maternal mortality rate due to early pregnancies and morbidity remains high, especially among very young women. We have made considerable progress over the past 20 years. Belgium hopes that the positive results obtained to date will encourage continued efforts.

In April 2014, Belgium was chosen to chair the forty-eighth session of the Commission on Population and Development. Sustainable development, which was among the themes of the session, depends on the successful follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. My country emphasizes the importance of the ICPD Programme of Action in furthering human rights as well as for the post-2015 development agenda.

I am very pleased to note the position taken by the African Union on several issues, such as the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Agenda, and the declaration from the Abuja+12 Summit on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa.

In conclusion, considering the linkages between population dynamics, environment and sustainable development, it is essential to better integrate population dynamics into development planning,

taking into account the challenge of population growth. We look forward to continue working together with Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to further the promising outcomes of ICPD beyond 2014, for the entire population without discrimination.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Mercedes del Carmen Guillén Vicente, Vice-Minister of Population, Migration and Religious Affairs of the United Mexican States.

Ms. Guillén Vicente (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to be here before the Assembly as part of the Mexican delegation. Since the start of the Administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto, we have reaffirmed our commitment to the eight major goals established in the Programme of Action, which has meant a substantive change in access to social rights, citizenship, inclusion and empowerment for millions of Mexicans.

As the deadline of 2015 approaches, Mexico has worked hard and has promoted far-reaching changes designed to ensure its success. In little more than 13 years, our country has made progress on 94 per cent of the indicators on the official list of the United Nations. For the remaining indicators, there is a high chance of these being met by 2015.

However, despite this success, poverty reduction and keeping up the positive trend of closing the inequality gap remain crucial for Mexico. Our response in this regard consists of the structural reforms implemented during the first 21 months of the current Administration, designed to accelerate economic growth and to enable us to create an inclusive Mexico, with a new social policy — a social policy that involves major changes, including a nationwide fight against hunger and the recently announced establishment of the new, nationally coordinated Prospera Social Inclusion Programme to serve on the frontline in Mexico's fight against poverty.

In the field of education, we have achieved our goal of delivering universal primary education.

With respect to the goals of empowering women and substantially improving maternal health, there has been progress, but challenges remain, as we have achieved 68 per cent of the target.

With regard to the environment, we have achieved our goals with respect to the supply of drinking water

and sanitation in advance of our deadline, and the deforestation rate is improving.

The Government of Mexico reaffirms its absolute commitment to continuing to play a major role in this international effort. We will continue to be active participants in defining the post-2015 development agenda, promoting broad consensus and endorsing the commitments assumed by Mexico as a responsible actor on the global stage.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Salah Ben Ammar, Minister of Health of Tunisia.

Mr. Ben Ammar (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to convey to the Secretary-General, and through him to the entire United Nations system, my thanks for their concerted efforts to ensure a life of dignity for people the world over. The holding of this special session dedicated to the follow-up of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) confirms the important place of this topic in the United Nations agenda.

The Conference, which was held in Cairo 1994, marked an important milestone for development. We attach great importance to the progress made since then throughout the world, but we also note the persisting inequalities that put certain groups at a disadvantage. In this context, I stress the importance of sex education for girls and boys, and of reproductive and women's health. For us, these are fundamental rights. We also attach great importance to the fight against violence against women and girls. We are fully attached to pursuing the principle of gender equality.

Tunisia participated effectively in the efforts launched by the ICPD and their momentum, including them in our national policies and programmes. We have submitted regular reports, most recently dedicated to issues of population and development in the context of the ICPD 2014 Global Review.

While we have achieved much progress, there remain a great deal of imbalances. These are due, specifically, to structural differences. In spite of the difficult transition we are going through, we have been able to achieve social and economic progress, which have allowed for us to strengthen the pillars of our republic and lay solid foundations for democracy and human rights, principles that are enshrined in the new Tunisian Constitution. We will, therefore, pursue that

reform policy throughout the upcoming period, based on the census that we undertook last year.

Addressing those challenges and the problems facing many strata of the population, the Programme of Action of the ICPD beyond 2014 is, for us, a necessity, specifically with respect to international and regional assessments. That perspective also involves ongoing progress in work on the post-2015 development agenda. We reiterate Tunisia's support for agreed international efforts to achieve a better future for all of humankind. I hope that the work of this special session will be crowned with success.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Samura Kamara, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): Pursuant to resolution 65/234, Sierra Leone has participated fully in the review processes at all levels, acknowledging the progress to date and the plans for the future with regard to the five key pillars, namely, dignity, human rights, health, governance and accountability.

Since the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, Sierra Leone has regularly participated in the many international and national conferences and workshops on the implementation of the Programme of Action. At the national level, Sierra Leone remains fully committed to implementing the recommendations set out on the five pillars, which are now integrated into our national development framework. Accordingly, we have pledged our commitment to the road map for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.

Sierra Leone has made significant progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, even though challenges still abound. The country's 2013 demographic and health survey indicates that some progress is being made towards the provision of basic health services for our people. Between 2008 and 2013, the total fertility rate dropped from 5.1 to 4.9 per cent, which was due largely to an increase in the use of modern family planning methods among married women, which doubled from 7 per cent to 16 per cent. Antenatal care by skilled birth attendants increased from 87 per cent to 97 per cent. During the same period, delivery by skilled health providers rose from 42 per cent to 61 per cent. Delivery at health care facilities doubled from 25 per cent to 56 per cent. The

rate of fully immunized children increased from 40 per cent to 68 per cent. And the use of insecticide-treated nets against malaria for children under the age of five doubled from 26 per cent to 49 per cent.

The celebration of those achievements is currently hampered by the Ebola outbreak. The Government is currently experiencing an acute drop in women's and children's access to health care, which has drastically reduced antenatal and post-natal care and institutional deliveries. Women of reproductive age make up about 60 per cent of the Ebola victims, owing mainly to their care-giving roles within families and communities. Some of our challenges include a low literacy rate, fear, stigmatization, myths and cultural beliefs, practices and systems, as well as a weak health care system.

As a Government, we appeal for a multi-pronged and timely approach to tackling this disease, so that the gains made through the free health care initiative and other developments are not lost. We do appreciate, however, that we have learned some very useful lessons, which will further guide us in strengthening our national health care system in order to prevent a recurrence of the current situation. At this juncture, let me applaud the support of our international partners at both the multilateral and the bilateral levels in this critical time of need in our nation's history.

We are pleased to report that our womenfolk have not been left behind in some of those achievements. A recent review of the progress in gender equality and women's empowerment reveals that there are now an appreciable number of women with secondary education, and many of the key positions in central and local Governments are held by women. The overall female participation in the labour market in both formal and informal activities stands far above that of the menfolk.

Deliberate policy actions are also being undertaken to ensure that women enjoy their rights, as exemplified by the enactment of the three laws on gender empowerment. We have also established a parliamentary committee on human rights, with a focus on women and children. Furthermore, we have fully embarked on a constitutional review process, where the voices of women and other disadvantaged groups are already coming out loud and clear. Legislation providing for a 30 per cent quota for women's representation across the board is soon to be submitted to the national Parliament for enactment.

It is also encouraging to report that the Government has developed a national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and on resolution 1820 (2008), on sexual violence. Significant progress has also been made in the areas of disability, children and youth and education, especially for the girl child. Like many other countries, we are committed to improving data collection and analysis for evidence-based decision-making, planning and development management. We recognize, however, that a lot more needs to be done to increase women's representation and participation in all spheres of life.

It is against that background that Sierra Leone adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014. The Declaration and the lessons learned will continue to serve as a guide in the formulation of our national population policies and programmes beyond 2014.

There is already a national consensus on focusing on several of the remaining challenges, in particular poverty eradication and the elimination of inequalities and discrimination; education, which should empower young people, especially girls; and health and improved access to essential services, while scaling up interventions to eradicate malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. We remain fully conscious of the need to invest in creating opportunities and a supportive environment for young people in terms of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, so that they can become productive, have access to jobs and realize their full potential,

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Sierra Leone's dedication to fully supporting the principles of the ICPD Programme of Action, especially in the context of the post-2015 agenda. We underscore the importance of strong partnerships and continued international cooperation in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Célestin Vunabandi Kanyamihigo, Minister of Planning and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Revolution of Modernity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Kanyamihigo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to warmly congratulate the President on presiding over the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the

Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. The Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to thank the Secretary-General for his high-quality report on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (A/69/62). I would also like to take this opportunity convey my sincere congratulate to Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin on his reappointment as Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

I am pleased to recall that the Democratic Republic of the Congo participated throughout all of the implementation, follow-up and evaluation process of the ICPD Programme of Action that led to the conclusion of the report before us today. I recall in particular our participation in the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review, the drafting of the national ICPD+20 report, the regional meetings, held by the Southern African Development Community in Maputo and the African Union in Addis Ababa, and the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York.

The consideration of the review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action reveals the significant progress made in our country, despite the fact that there remain a number of challenges to be overcome. Indeed, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is emerging from almost two decades of armed conflict, meaning that Government efforts have been focused primarily on consolidating peace. Our efforts have allowed the country to reach the goals of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative in July 2010, to relaunch economic growth, which average 8.1 per cent between 2010 and 2013, and to establish a large-scale basic socioeconomic infrastructure rehabilitation programme.

It was against this backdrop that maternal and infant health improved. The maternal mortality rate went from almost 1,800 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1998 to 846 death per 100,000 live births in 2014. The rate of skilled attendance at birth also improved significantly, going from 60 per cent in 2001 to 80 per cent in 2014. The child mortality rate went from 213 to 104 deaths per 1,000 live births between 2001 and 2014. In the area of education, the average rate of primary school attendance went from 50.7 per cent in 2001 to 91 per cent in 2012. This improvement can be explained primarily by the provision of free primary

education, the promotion of education for girls and the implementation of a large-scale school-rebuilding programme by the Government.

Great efforts have been undertaken in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Besides the ratification relevant international legal frameworks, the legal and institutional frameworks to promote gender equality and child protection have been improved. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, adopted in February 2006, enshrines the equal rights of women and men, as well as the principle of parity in public sector management. Significant reforms are under way with a view to excising any provisions that discriminate against women and girls from our legal framework.

At the institutional level, the national gender policy and national strategy to fight gender-based violence have been developed and are now being implemented. The draft revised family law, like the draft law for the implementation of parity, are before Parliament for its consideration. Given the magnitude of the violence committed against women and girls during the war, the Government has undertaken legislative reforms to strengthen the crime of rape and criminalize the other forms of violence against women and girls, while setting out a procedure for the effective prosecution of those responsible.

In spite of the progress that has been made, it is also important to note that the long period of socio-political instability suffered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the first decade of the ICPD Programme of Action hindered its proper implementation. Today, a number of new issues have emerged and are among the national priorities and challenges to be met in order to adequately implement the ICPD Programme of Action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These include the need to conduct a second national census in order to update our demographic data and better plan and implement our development programmes; the upsurge in gender-based violence; the ongoing challenge of armed groups, resulting in the mass displacement of populations, in particular in the eastern part of the country; our predominantly young population, with all the consequences this has for school enrolment, employment, and sexual and reproductive health; a high fertility rate and unmet family planning needs; the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS; and, finally, protecting the environment, combatting climate change and upholding the rights of indigenous peoples.

To meet these challenges, the Government has further strengthened bilateral and multilateral partnerships, on the one hand, and collaboration with civil society and the private sector, on the other. This is why the Democratic Republic of the Congo advocates for a post-2015 framework that is broadly participatory; strengthens the commitment of all in favour of human rights, the culture of the rule of law and international norms, and the fight against injustice and discrimination in all its forms; and guarantees the right of every person to participate fully in society and in decision-making.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo fully agrees with the conclusions of the framework of actions for the follow-up to the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is committed to continuing in its efforts to implement the Programme. In this regard, I reiterate our support, as expressed during the review beyond 2014 at the regional level, with full recognition of the sovereign rights of all countries to implement the recommendations in accordance with their laws and development priorities and with strict respect for the religious and ethical values and cultural heritage of their populations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe): At the outset, let me affirm that the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) remains as relevant today as it was in 1994, in Cairo.

Since the ICPD, Zimbabwe has made significant progress towards addressing population issues within the context of its development framework. We cannot separate population issues from development overall. We note the great impact urbanization and internal and international migration have on population dynamics as well as on development. Rapid urbanization and internal migration are some of the major population and development challenges facing many developing countries, including Zimbabwe. Increased rates of population growth in urban areas have resulted in increased pressure on existing infrastructure, whose rate of expansion continues to lag behind. Authorities and residents of these areas often grapple with inadequate water, sanitation and energy infrastructure.

Zimbabwe's efforts on population and development have paid significant attention to the human rights underpinnings of the Programme of Action. This has led to impressive improvements in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women, access to family planning and expanded access to education for all. In the course of combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic, we have also derived crucial lessons that have helped us to strengthen our health system.

Many developing countries, including my own, continue to grapple with unacceptably high maternal mortality rates and infant and neo-natal deaths. We therefore believe that more ground work needs to be covered to ensure that pregnancy and child birth cease to be death traps for women.

Going forward, I urge all of us here gathered to do more in addressing other critical matters identified in the Programme of Action, such as the needs of elderly people and our youth. In fulfilling our obligations under the Programme of Action, discussions on population matters must always respect the primacy of Member States' responsibilities in prioritizing interventions and programmes.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Maikibi Kadidiatou, Minister of Population, Women's Promotion and Child Protection of the Republic of the Niger.

Ms. Kadidiatou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): It is my distinct honour to deliver this message on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President and Head of State of the Republic of the Niger, to the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth special session on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

I would like first to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the twenty-ninth special session and to assure him that he may count throughout his mandate on the support of the Niger, whose commitment to the objectives established by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) remains more solid than ever.

The participative and inclusive approach used in preparing the important report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62), guarantees the relevance of the programmes and actions planned for the coming years. My delegation commends the Secretary-General, the partners and all the relevant actors who participated in

the process, in which the Niger took an active part. The report before us emphasizes concerns that match our national priorities, including respect for and protection of human rights, particularly regarding reproduction, universal access to sexual and reproductive health care and education, including sexuality education, and the elimination of violence against women and girls. The report is therefore a valuable basis for more effective work in the elaboration of the global post-2015 development agenda.

Twenty years after the adoption and implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Niger has made significant progress towards achieving the goals in the areas of governance, health care, education and the promotion of dignity and human rights. However, strong population growth of 3.9 per cent per year, which has resulted in the doubling of the population in fewer than 18 years, remains a formidable challenge for our country. In that regard, we are committed to promoting strong and accelerated economic growth through appropriate economic and social policies and investment in human development, as enshrined in the Government's renewal programme. We have resolved to explore all options to confront that challenge, including the demographic dividend.

The Niger has bright hopes for the global post-2015 development agenda. We believe that several elements should form the basis for drawing up strategies in accordance with the framework, including strengthening the implementation of institutional texts on dignity and human rights; reducing inequalities among the various population groups; promoting economic policies for sustainable growth that are based on technical and professional education for young people and their employment; strong action aimed at young people, who make up a significant section of our population, particularly regarding their sexual and reproductive health. The programmes to be developed should take into account the social and cultural diversity of our many countries.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Sandra Ms. Guevara, Minister for Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of El Salvador.

Ms. Guevara (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I convey greetings on behalf of the President and the Government of El Salvador. El Salvador welcomes the decision to organize this special session, in light of the fact that the issues addressed at the International

Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and in its Programme of Action, as well as key issues in its implementation, remain fully relevant today.

As a country, we share the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report, entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), particularly as it indicates that the change of the paradigm prevalent at the time of the Conference continues to demonstrate that aspirations to personal and collective development benefit from an emphasis on individual dignity and human rights. The investment in individual human rights, capacities and dignity promoted in all areas of the Cairo Programme of Action throughout the life cycle will undoubtedly be the basis for achieving sustainable development.

In that respect, we consider of vital importance that the findings of the Secretary-General's report and the results of the regional conferences to review the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action should be incorporated into the discussion on the post-2015 development agenda. We welcome the space created to enable countries to participate in the review process by means of a global survey. In El Salvador, the survey involved more than 18 national institutions and provided a major incentive for our country to produce a national report on the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action, in which civil society organizations also participated.

Allow me to note some of my country's achievements over the 20 years of the Cairo Programme of Action. With the goal of making universal and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care a reality, the Ministry of Health is implementing a sexual and reproductive health policy that has strengthened the quality of maternity and neonatal care, with special emphasis on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. We have a national plan to achieve substantive equality in order to guarantee gender mainstreaming in public policies that favour women. We have enacted and implemented a comprehensive law for a life free of violence, and a law to ensure the equality and equity of women and the eradication of discrimination against them. We have a system of gender-disaggregated statistics, as well as a model programme, known as City of Women, that provides various care services for women.

We have established a women's bank that promotes the economic empowerment of women. We have enacted a law on political parties that guarantees a quota of at least 30 per cent of female participation in elections and decision-making. Our State budget is endowed with a gender focus that is a positive action to meet the practical needs of women. We have developed a Salvadoran youth platform to enhance the sexual and reproductive health of our young people. We have also reformed the national Constitution to acknowledge and respect the human rights of our indigenous peoples, among other achievements.

There remain considerable challenges to the post-2015 development agenda. We need to continue to move forward to achieve genuine equality for women, gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the elimination of various forms of violence against women and girls. We also need to continue combating poverty and discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to guarantee the sexual and reproductive rights of women. Moreover, we need to strengthen the equal participation of women in politics and their ownership over their own bodies.

As a country, we are fully committed to the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action 20 years after its adoption, taking into account the priority measures and agreements achieved at the First Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Uruguay, as enshrined in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. It is important that we take immediate steps to meet the expectations of our peoples and eliminate prevailing inequalities, with a particular focus on groups that have been historically discriminated against and vulnerable.

We cannot deny the fact that population and development issues are closely linked to national economic, social and environmental realities. In addressing them, it is important to strengthen international cooperation and global, regional and subregional alliances, and to reach agreements between countries in order to develop common strategies and actions. I wish to thank the United Nations Population Fund for its cooperation and contribution to our 2012-2015 country programme, and to appeal to the United Nations agencies to include the main focuses of the Cairo Programme of Action in their strategic plans and to continue implementing them in the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Republic of El Salvador to implementing the commitments of the Cairo Programme of Action, as well as the key measures and regional agreements achieved on that topic.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Bathabile Dlamini, Minister of Social Development of the Republic of South Africa.

Ms. Dlamini (South Africa): This special session to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is significant for South Africa. That is because it coincides with our own 20 years of life without the discrimination and oppression of apartheid. As we celebrate our new and emerging democracy, we are reminded that our struggle against policies and laws that sought to exclude and marginalize people on the basis of their race, class, sex, gender, religion, age, disability or sexual orientation is one that forms part of the ongoing ICPD agenda.

South African population policy, in accordance with the South African Constitution and guided by the ICPD Programme of Action, emphasizes the attainment of sustainable development and places people at the centre of that development. If we are to improve the lives of people, ensuring that people enjoy access to fundamental human rights cannot be separated from the ideals of attaining equitable and sustainable development. South Africa acknowledges the progress and huge strides made over the past 20 years since our Governments met in Cairo to adopt the ICPD Programme of Action.

We note, however, that much remains to be done despite our efforts, especially on the African continent. We have not yet realized our commitment to providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and rights for all, or the opportunities to which States have and are committed. The recent 20-year review of the ICPD Programme of Action clearly pointed out the huge gaps, as well as the uneven and fragmented progress, that remain towards ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and rights for all women and girls.

During this special session, it is critical to take note of our implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action over the past 20 years. It is necessary to highlight the fact that further actions are required to achieve the goals we set for ourselves, including through the upcoming

intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. South Africa therefore welcomes the thorough review and preparations undertaken by the United Nations Population Fund.

We support the findings and recommendations of the operational review contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/69/62), entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014". South Africa further reaffirms its support for the regional review outcome, the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa Beyond 2014. The Addis Ababa Declaration is Africa's consensus position on the review of the ICPD Programme of Action, adopted by African ministers responsible for population in October 2013 and endorsed by African Heads of State and Government at the African Union Summit in January 2014.

Consistent with the Addis Ababa Declaration, South Africa has launched the following programmes. We have improved access to sexual and reproductive health care and rights for women and girls by enhancing access to safe abortion services and modern means of contraception. Earlier this year, we launched a comprehensive contraception and family planning programme. Through these programmes, we will continue to integrate sexual and reproductive health-care, HIV and family planning services. We have also started a school health programme that will provide comprehensive health-care services for young people and adolescents. Our Department of Health is improving programmes to eliminate preventable maternal mortality through the provision of comprehensive maternity care and universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

South Africa has experienced an unparalleled increase in life expectancy since 2005, thanks to the world's biggest programme of HIV/AIDS drug treatment. The rise in life expectancy from 54 years in 2005 to 60 years in 2011 was of the order usually seen only after a major societal shift, such as the abolition of slavery. We have maximized the benefits of our demographic dividend through our national development plan, such as improving the implementation of the national social protection floor. Our child-support grant has been proven to reduce poverty and inequality and has resulted in reduced risky sexual behaviour among adolescents. We further intend to universalize the

child-support grant and the State old-age pension to support all sections of our inactive population.

In order to keep the Addis Ababa Declaration's promise of eliminating all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence, we are developing better policies and programmes to protect women and children. Our Department of Justice is setting up a hate-crimes unit to deal specifically with discrimination and violence, targeting people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Given their significance, South Africa calls for regional review outcomes, such as the Addis Ababa Declaration, to be taken into account in the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014 and to be integrated into the intergovernmental negotiations process on the post-2015 development agenda.

We view this special session as an important occasion to reaffirm the relevance of the ICPD Programme of Action and to continue to engage on what we have achieved and, more importantly, what we still have to achieve. That includes saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and girls who die unnecessarily giving birth or of the complications of unsafe abortions. Other notable gaps and areas that need special attention include the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality at the national and international levels, which are aggravated by gender inequalities, the lack of empowerment of women and girls, gender-based violence and continued inequalities within and between countries and regions.

South Africa remains committed to continuing to cooperate with fellow Member States to celebrate the successes we have achieved thus far and, more importantly, to promote the further measures needed to realize the objectives we set ourselves at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Belarus on a point of order.

Mr. Mackay (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to address you, Sir, and all delegations present in the Hall with an appeal and request on a point of order that all speakers stick to the established speaking time of three minutes. Indeed, the President has repeatedly called on all delegations not to exceed the three-minute limit. Given how late it is and how busy all our delegations are, we run the risk of not allowing the high-level representatives who have come here especially from afar a chance to speak. We would

therefore ask all delegations to demonstrate respect for each other by allowing everyone the same opportunity to speak that they themselves wish to enjoy. We believe that this would be in line with the spirit of cooperation we are all trying to support.

The Acting President: I thank the representative of Belarus, and hope that his message has been heard.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Ghebreyesus (Ethiopia): I am very pleased to be here today to attend this special session on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014.

Over the past 20 years, Ethiopia has made important strides in setting up equitable basic services to reach out to the most vulnerable, who have been empowered with access to new opportunities. We have done our best to address all forms of discrimination and to protect the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable. We now have the opportunity to ensure that, pursuant to the recommendations of the Commission on Population and Development at its forty-seventh session, the essential and critical features of the challenges we face in connection with population are reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

We will have to take in account that, despite our achievements, the challenges are still enormous and the stakes are indeed high. Persistent gender inequality continues to hamper women's access to reproductive health-care services, and many harmful traditional practices continue to pose serious challenges, making it difficult to ensure the well-being of women and girls. We must remain committed in our common resolve to further reduce significantly and eventually eliminate those harmful practices.

One of the other messages that came out strong from the Commission's most recent deliberation is that the ICPD agenda is still unfinished and that, despite our achievements, progress has been uneven and much more still needs to be done. No doubt, we are afforded with an incredible opportunity to continue with our efforts of addressing population-related challenges. I am confident that in the process of crafting the post-2015 development agenda, Member States will take those concerns into consideration.

We in Ethiopia have done reasonably well in implementing the critical issues articulated in the ICPD. Our national population policy was issued in 1993 with the aim of harmonizing the rate of population growth with the capacity of the country for the development and rational utilization of natural resources, with the ultimate goal of raising the well-being of the population over time.

Our road to ensuring full access and full choice to reproductive health, including family planning, an essential part of ensuring the health and well-being of all our people, has been long and arduous. We have worked hard to address the lack of information through social marketing and community awareness activities. Through the implementation of innovative strategies, Ethiopia has improved the uptake of family planning services from 3 per cent in 1990 to more than 40 per cent in 2014. That is truly remarkable progress and a testament to our commitment. The Growth and Transformation Plan, Ethiopia's five-year national development plan, which is currently in its final year of implementation, has given due emphasis to integrating population issues in the overall and sectoral plans.

On gender equity, equality and women's advancement, Ethiopia has also undertaken measures, including developing policies, plans of action and development packages, as well as establishing the necessary infrastructure for their implementation. Mainstreaming gender issues into sectoral and overall national development plans and the budget process of the country, and strengthening gender-disaggregated data to inform policies and programmes, are important areas that have been addressed. The wide gender gap that used to have prevailed in primary education has been narrowed by providing equal access to boys and girls and taking timely and necessary actions to address the factors that hinder the girl child from attending school. The revised family law and criminal law have become instrumental in preventing harmful traditional practices and promoting gender equality and reproductive rights. But we need to do more and we have the commitment to continue along the trajectory of promoting those objectives.

To be successful, we must take bold action and never shy away from difficult challenges. We will do so because it is a cause worth fighting for. It is in this spirit that we shall proceed in Ethiopia with confidence that international cooperation in this area will continue to be strengthened in order to implement the priorities we

set and register successful outcomes in the upcoming ICPD implementation period.

Let me conclude by expressing our appreciation to all development partners and the private sector who have always been ready to work with us in close partnership.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Emerine Kabanshi, Minister of Community Development, Mother and Child Health of the Republic of Zambia.

Ms. Kabanshi (Zambia): I join other speakers in congratulating the President and the members of his Bureau on their election.

Zambia commends the Secretary-General and the President for convening the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Zambia wishes to note the Secretary-General's report A/69/62, "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014", as well as the index report on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122).

We are pleased to have contributed to the global review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014, which highlighted progress made and challenges that still daunt the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. We reiterate our support for the views expressed in the context of the Africa regional review of the implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014, where we joined in the adoption of the regional plan of action for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the importance of harnessing Africa's demographic dividends given its youthful population.

Zambia has registered positive economic growth, averaging 5.6 per cent per annum over the past 10 years. Progress is being made in reducing HIV prevalence, maternal and infant mortality, increasing women and youth empowerment and primary school enrolment. However, challenges still remain in providing universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, high teenage pregnancies, the reduction of poverty and economic inequality, among others.

As part of the remedial measures to the observed challenges, Zambia has put in place various policies and programmes to advance the economic and social status of women and young people, especially girls, through the Citizen Economic Empowerment Fund and the Youth Development Fund. The Government's policies and strategies, which include the national population policy, the national health policy, the national gender policy, the national youth policy and the reproductive health and the re-entry policy for girls who become pregnant, have enhanced the social economic status of women and girls, though much more remains to be done. Zambia has also made a firm commitment to increasing family planning uptake, especially for rural women, in addition to access to sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights through the launch of the eight-year Family Planning Scale-Up Plan and Adolescent Health Strategy. The Government has further developed the National Strategy for Development of Statistics in order to lay a foundation for evidence-based decision-making in the implementation of the strategies mentioned above. The Strategy is also intended to holistically harmonize data collection and monitoring and evaluation systems in the country.

Zambia reaffirms its commitment to the resolution adopted at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, calling for the full implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its implementation beyond 2014. Those include sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, population and development, education and gender equality and equity, which are integrally linked to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development.

Zambia looks forward to having a post-2015 development agenda that embraces the principles of the ICPD and calls for a full operationalization of population dividend elements for the benefit of our women, young girls and youth. Zambia acknowledges the support rendered by our cooperating partners, including the United Nations Population Fund, in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Fatma Abdul Habib Ferej, Minister of State, First Vice-President's Office, Zanzibar Government on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Ms. Ferej (United Republic of Tanzania): Despite the fact that two decades have passed, the vision

of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is still relevant and of paramount importance to the social and economic development of every nation. Its relevance has become more evident as we negotiate the post-2015 development agenda, into which some unfinished issues need to be integrated.

I am glad to inform the Assembly that Tanzania undertook an operational review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, and the findings indicate overall good progress on reproductive and sexual health, at 88 per cent; morbidity and mortality, at 88 per cent; and education, at 82 per cent. Tanzania made significant achievements on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2, 3 and 4 well before 2015. We have reduced mortality rates for children under 5 years of age and infants from 191 to 81 per 1,000 live births from 1990 to 2012, while the infant mortality rate has decreased from 115 to 51 per 1,000 live births during the same period.

Despite those achievements, Tanzania is facing the challenge of children dying from preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and tuberculosis. Tanzania has achieved little in maternal mortality, going from 529 to 432 deaths per 100,000 births in from 1990 to 2012. However, my Government is fully committed to intensifying the efforts to improve health services in maternal health facilities.

Despite remarkable improvement in the aforementioned areas over the past two decades, there have been challenges in improving other areas. The achievement of goal number one of the MDGs is still one of the major stumbling blocks to achieving the objectives and goals of the ICPD and its Programme of Action. Approximately 12 million Tanzanians are still living below the poverty line. Abject poverty has led to a pattern of early marriage and childbearing among Tanzania's youth. Statistics indicate that, in 2010, 4 out of 10 women were married by 18 years of age, and 23 per cent of women began childbearing by 19 years of age. The high number of maternal deaths is still a challenge. Those deaths are due to low utilization of family planning services, low coverage of care at birth by skilled providers and low postnatal care.

The failure to achieve all the targets of MDG 1 is one of the major stumbling blocks in achieving the objectives and goals of the ICPD Programme of Action. It is estimated that 12 million Tanzanians are living below the poverty line. Poverty has led to the pattern of early marriage and childbearing among the Tanzania's

youth. Statistics indicate that, in 2010, 4 in 10 women were married by the age of 18 years and 23 per cent of those women began childbearing by 19 years of age.

Generally, major challenges that impede the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action include inadequate capacities in skills and institutional structures; lack of human capital, research, data use and modern technology; and financial constraints. We are working hard in collaboration with other development partners to address these challenges so that we can successfully implement the Programme of Action.

Lastly, my delegation wishes to underscore the following points, which should be taken into account in the post-2014 agenda. There is unfinished business that still has national priority and will need to be carried forward in the areas of poverty eradication; the elimination of inequalities and discrimination, including on the basis of sex; education to empower the youth, especially girls; and efforts to address new and emerging challenges, including that of the youth population. We need to maximize demographic benefits by investing in efforts creating opportunities and supportive environments for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in order for young people to create and access quality education and jobs, thereby realizing their full potential.

There is a need to strengthen our health systems. A fully functional and efficient health system is required in all countries for the achievement of ICPD action beyond 2014 and the MDGs. We need to build health systems, which, as we all know, takes time and investment if it is to show results. We need to improve access to essential services while scaling up interventions to eradicate malaria, tuberculosis and HIV and addressing other non-communicable diseases. Adequate resource mobilization to fund high-impact interventions based on the needs of the country needs to be accelerated and is most important.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Natalia Pedro da Costa Umbelina Neto, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Community of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mrs. Neto (Sao Tome and Principe) (spoke in French): We take this opportunity to welcome the *International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 Global Review Report* and the report on the interactive

debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122).

We are happy to have contributed to the global survey for the review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014 and note that the Government of Sao Tome and Principe has made considerable progress in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action. I would highlight several examples of that: the establishment of comprehensive services relating to sexual and reproductive health; the provision of information and education on sexuality for adolescents; the increase of demographic and economic data to assist in planning; the creation of a legal framework on gender issues; and improvements to institutional and political frameworks to facilitate the participation of young people in the planning process.

Nevertheless, we are aware of the remaining challenges to be addressed to improve the quality of life of our population, ensure equality and equity and protect the environment for future generations. We share the conclusions of the review, which demonstrate that, despite significant progress in poverty reduction and economic growth since the International Conference on Population and Development, much remains to be done in order to satisfy basic needs and provide access to decent employment, social protection, health services and education. Many people still face significant obstacles to their enjoyment of their human rights.

We are happy to note that human rights and equality were the basis for the report's analytical approach. We share the report's conclusion that investing in individual rights, capacities and dignity in the various sectors covered by the ICPD is the basis for sustainable development. It is clear that the emphasis on increasing inequality in wealth and income, the weak response to gender inequality and women's empowerment, the necessity of learning and human capacity-building, especially for youth, addressing inequalities in the actions of sexual and reproductive health services, including strengthening health systems, have great implications for development policy. The impact of population dynamics at the micro and macro levels also requires the integration of population issues in development planning.

We agree that the development challenges we face require the systematic involvement of all stakeholders, especially young people, who represent 38 per cent of our population, in developing the responses — as well as

partnerships and regional and global leadership — that these challenges require. In that regard, we are pleased to reiterate our support expressed in the context of the regional review of the implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014 at which time we joined the adoption of the regional plan of action for furthering the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

We are fully committed to pursuing efforts to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, taking into account the results of our regional review and the conclusions and recommendations of the review of the ICPD beyond 2014. We call for the inclusion of the findings and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General and the results of the regional review of the post-2015 development agenda.

My country, Sao Tome and Principe, is proud to partner with the international community to reaffirm its support for the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and for the integrated approach of the actions outlined in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mario Lopes da Rosa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Da Rosa (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): Like speakers before me, I would like to congratulate the President of the special session upon his election.

My country, Guinea-Bissau, is pleased to welcome the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014” (A/69/62), as well as the index report on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122).

The participation of our country in the global survey that preceded the review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014 was an opportunity for us to analyse the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. We were able at that time to assess the challenges that lie ahead to improve the quality of life of our citizens. We have found that there remains much to do to ensure equality and fairness and to

protect the environment for future generations, both at the national and international levels.

At the national level, we have a very ambitious agenda whose implementation requires an alliance of wills and internal and external efforts. At the international level, we would like to emphasize that we fully agree with the conclusions of the review on significant gains in poverty reduction and economic growth since the International Conference on Population and Development.

The report of the Secretary-General focuses on the growing inequality of wealth and income and the difficulties in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, and strongly emphasizes the need for continuous learning and capacity-building particularly for young people. The report calls for a fight against inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services, including the call for States to strengthen health systems in both rural and urban areas, given their important implications for development policy.

We agree on the fact that development challenges require the systematic involvement of all stakeholders in developing responses to these challenges, which requires a global partnership and leadership through the United Nations. To that end, we are pleased to reiterate our support expressed in the context of regional review of the implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014 when we joined in adopting the regional action plan for further implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Guinea-Bissau’s dedicated commitment to joining the international community in reiterating its support for the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the vision set forth in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Aloha Núñez, Minister of the Popular Power for the Indigenous People of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Núñez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): On behalf of the Bolivarian Revolutionary and Humanist Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros, we welcome this special session as an opportunity to share with the General Assembly the latest developments in our social policy in areas related to the issue that brings us together.

Venezuela has been working to build an inclusive and plural social democratic model and has been able to implement public policies that give priority to the social dimension of development, based on the constitutional principles of solidarity, social justice, cooperation, equality and participation. Our Government therefore launched a national campaign for the eradication of extreme poverty, in order to combat that terrible scourge, which is accompanied by a series of macrosocial policies on health, nutrition, education, social security, peaceful coexistence and solidarity, culture of savings and production, inter alia, placing the goal of being a territory free of extreme poverty by 2019.

As regards reproductive health, the implementation plan for sexual and reproductive rights and the early pregnancy prevention programme were adopted with the aim of promoting awareness campaigns and advancing family planning, with support from United Nations Fund for Population.

On gender equality and equity, we have adopted and implemented a series of legal instruments that constitute the foundation of the current legal system that makes Venezuela a country at the forefront in the protection and dissemination of women's rights. We have also succeeded in mainstreaming gender in the formulation of the national budget and for federal agencies, and the creation of an institutional infrastructure for services for the defense of the rights of women in all 23 States of the country. To make progress in the indices of gender equality and achieve the goal of declaring Venezuela a territory free of violence against women by the year 2019, we propose to advance legal and institutional aspects that strengthen feminist popular power and support and strengthen all forms of progress for women.

The new law on the promotion and protection of the right to equality of persons with HIV/AIDS, adopted last 14 August, in addition to protecting patients, eliminates all forms of discrimination by affiliation. In other words, it covers anyone who maintains a close personal relationship with a person with HIV/AIDS. The post-2015 development agenda must reflect the various models of development without favouring some over others, since we are all sovereign people. The agenda must ensure financial support without conditions, especially from all developed countries, with a real commitment by all Member States. There are multiple challenges, because we must begin by recognizing the errors committed in order to remedy them. It is necessary to adapt to the changes and assess

what has been achieved within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, which are not end points, but rather departure points for proposing a post-2015 agenda to build the best road or roads to defend the rights of society.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Moukoko Mbonjo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to read out the following message that Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, has sent as Cameroon's statement to this special session of the General Assembly.

"Exactly 20 years ago, we met in Cairo in order to examine, within the framework of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the fundamental issues related to population and their links with the issues of development. After 20 years, with 2.5 billion additional inhabitants, what assessment can we give of the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action, and how do we see ourselves in the next 20 years?"

"As far as Cameroon is concerned, our country has worked to put into practice the ICPD Programme of Action. Cameroon wanted, first of all, to shape its national policy on population along the guidelines of the Cairo Programme of Action by focusing on the correlation between population and development. In so doing, our top priorities have been issues relating to education, particularly of girls; the promotion of gender equality; and the development of sustained economic growth and sustainable development; reduction of maternal and child mortality; and access to reproductive health services.

"The results of those policies today are non-negligible, as we have an economic growth of approximately 5 per cent per year, which has fostered the adoption of measures that have improved our social indicators in various areas. Those policies have also led to the reduction of inequalities between men and women, particularly in politics. The number of women in the National Assembly has gone from 17 per cent to 31 per cent within a single legislative term. In the Senate, there are also a considerable number of seats held

by women. There has also been a reduction in the rate of HIV/AIDS infections, as well as a reduction in maternal and child mortality, improvements in student enrolment and in education, reaching levels higher than in any other sub-Saharan country, and growth in the access to decent work.

“Those achievements have been made possible thanks to an effective system of monitoring progress in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action and of follow-up to national strategic policies. Every five years, starting in 1999, our programme was evaluated, which made it possible to monitor what our programme had achieved in implementing the ICPD goals and to make appropriate adjustments as necessary. While that progress appears noteworthy, it cannot, of course, conceal the significant challenges that remain for my country. Those challenges require additional efforts in the areas of reproductive health, particularly early pregnancies; combating gender violence; combating emerging diseases; reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS through the prevention of new infections; improving the quality of education; combating malaria, which remains the main cause of mortality in Cameroon; and reducing youth unemployment.

“Cameroon considers the family to be the cradle of development and stability. In a world where the meaning of the family is receding, it is imperative that that institution be protected and that every child should be brought up by a father and mother who are able to give the child a quality education. The Cairo Programme of Action recognizes that

‘The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive protection and support. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses, and husband and wife should be equal partners’ (*A/CONF.171/13, chapter II, principle 9*).

“Of course, no one can fail to notice that the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the ICPD coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the celebration the International Year of the Family. That coincidence should be interpreted as a sign promoting better protection of the family and should be taken into account in all programmes related to population and development.

“As we develop a framework for the post-2015 development agenda, the link between population and development remains at the heart of an international programme whose ultimate goal is the flourishing and the well-being of the peoples concerned. For Cameroon, the achievement of the ICPD Programme of Action goals is closely linked to the eradication of poverty, which can only be achieved through international solidarity, for which Cameroon would like to call on everyone for their total commitment.”

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Nestorine Sangaré Compaoré, Minister for the Advancement of Women and Gender of Burkina Faso.

Ms. Compaoré (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Twenty years after the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Burkina Faso has made major progress in its efforts to reach the ICPD goals that it has set for itself. Among other things, we can cite sustained economic growth at an average of 6 per cent per year since 1994, a decrease in maternal mortality of 39 per cent, improved access to health care and reproductive care in both urban and rural settings, and an increased rate of school attendance from 33.8 per cent in 1993 to 81.3 per cent in 2012. In addition, in 2009, Burkina Faso adopted a national gender policy and a programme aimed at dealing with the inequalities between men and women, which is among the country’s priority programmes.

Notwithstanding the progress made over the past 20 years, it must be recognized that there are still many challenges to be met at the economic, social and demographic levels.

At the economic level, inclusive economic growth within the framework of sustainable development remains a priority objective, with the aim of achieving a rapid reduction in poverty and income inequality.

At the social level, there needs to be more focus on the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, as maternal mortality remains at 340 deaths per 100,000 births. Improved access to sexual and reproductive health-care services for young people and couples and efforts to combat harmful cultural practices, such as early marriages and female genital mutilation, are issues that are of concern to the Government of Burkina Faso. The promotion of universal primary education

and support for girls' access to secondary education and technical training are also areas of interest. Access to decent employment for young people — young girls in particular — and the creation of opportunities for self-employment and the promotion of the economic empowerment of women are ways in which we hope that, by reducing poverty among women, we can also mitigate their vulnerability, which, inter alia, exposes them to unwanted pregnancies.

At the demographic level, controlling rapid population growth remains a priority for the Government, which has adopted a national population policy to specifically address fertility and migration issues, and to promote the inclusion of population issues in development plans and programmes.

Faced with those challenges, we will need the ongoing, intensified and updated support of the international community in order to achieve the objectives pertaining to population and sustainable development. Burkina Faso therefore welcomes the commitment shown by the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund, which have responded to the call to action from the Sahel by launching a project on realizing the demographic dividend in the region. Burkina Faso would like to serve as an example and a model case for that initiative by focusing on support for women and children and for their economic empowerment; on the retention of girls in school; on the effective implementation of the law on education, which makes school attendance mandatory until the age of 16; and on the strengthening of efforts aimed at combating early and forced marriages through care and psychological, legal and support services for young girls who are victims of forced marriages and early and unwanted pregnancies. There will also be a focus on combating violence against women and girls, because when a woman re-appropriates the power to make decisions on her sexuality and reproductive rights, there are often implications that can involve domestic violence. That is why Burkina Faso would like to strengthen efforts in that area.

My delegation reaffirms its commitment to the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action and the sovereign right of each Member State to implement the recommendations of the Programme of Action or other initiatives, in accordance with the relevant laws and priorities. My delegation takes the opportunity provided by this special session to commend the work of the United Nations Population Fund, which has for years supported

our Government in implementing the agreed efforts. In conclusion, I would like to thank the President for his able leadership of the Assembly at this session.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Omar Sey, Minister of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of the Gambia.

Mr. Sey (Gambia): The Gambia would like to associate itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the African Union.

The Gambia reaffirms its commitments to the principles, charters and protocols that advance the population and development agenda, particularly with regard to the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and rights and to the enhancement of the decision-making powers of women and youth at all levels. In that regard, the Government of the Gambia continues to strongly believe in the principle of universal access to reproductive health and services, including for HIV/AIDs. We also believe that women be given the right to decide freely the timing and number of children they wish to have. We have indeed recognized the fact that universal access to reproductive health and services, including HIV/AIDS, is a prerequisite for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

In addition, the Gambia, in its various development policies and programmes, upholds the right of adolescents and youth to access information and services related to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and has taken steps to integrate the reproductive health issues of women, adolescents and youth into our national health and population policies and our Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment.

Under the dynamic leadership of the President of the Republic, the Government of the Gambia continues to demonstrate significant political will in providing health services to all Gambians at affordable prices, most significantly through the provision of free maternal and child health services in public health facilities. Similarly, the First Lady's Save the Baby initiative has promoted renewed efforts and attention to address maternal and newborn health. Immunization coverage is nearly universal in the country. Furthermore, malaria prevention and management during pregnancy, an integral element of reproductive health services in the Gambia, is a source of envy in the subregion. The same is true for access to health-service delivery points, as

over 85 per cent of the population is within 5 kilometres of a primary health-care post.

Notable among the key achievements since 1994 are the impressive improvements in girls' education and women's empowerment; Government support to national population and housing censuses and surveys; and a reduction in poverty levels. Women in the Gambia actively take part in all endeavours, from working in homes and on farms to managing the affairs of the State machinery, as they have gained increasing access to productive resources and institutional support services.

In an attempt to play our role in promoting South-South collaboration, the Gambia has shared technology, skills and best practices in the areas of reproductive health, population and development with other member countries in the Partners in Population and Development partnership. The Government has invested significantly over the years in reproductive health, which has yielded positive results, as indicated in our recently concluded demographic and health survey.

While counting successes in implementing the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, we continue to face a number of challenges, which include resource inadequacies and the youthfulness of the population. The Gambia remains one of the most densely populated countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with a population density estimated at 125 persons per square kilometre. It is worth noting that the high population density, if left unchecked, may pose challenges in terms of both environmental sustainability and agricultural production. There is also a significant unmet need for emergency obstetric-care services.

It is worth noting that, unless the international community and Governments fulfil their funding commitments to address population and development issues, the developing countries in particular will find it difficult to tackle the challenges posed by our populations, especially the challenges relating to the youthful generation. I want to thank our donor partners in population and development, in particular the United Nations Population Fund, for their unflinching support.

Despite all the challenges outlined above, the Government of the Gambia is still committed to managing population issues in the context of the post-2015 agenda in order to accelerate the pace of socioeconomic development and ultimately improve the quality of life of all Gambians.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Phillip Muller, Minister of Health of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Muller (Marshall Islands): I bring warm greetings on behalf of President Christopher Loeak and the people of the Marshall Islands.

As a nation, the Marshall Islands faces serious hurdles hampering our basic social development: low rates of economic development, growing urban density, limited national resources and, as a low-lying nation, extreme vulnerabilities to climate impacts and natural disasters. Although our nation is small, our population growth rates are among the highest in the world. In addition, non-communicable diseases are at epidemic proportions. Diabetes incidence rates are among the highest in the world.

The Marshall Islands has recently adopted a three-year national strategic development plan, which cuts across all key issues and sectors. That can build on our recent progress towards the goals discussed in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Review process.

In public health, we have already worked towards integrating early public awareness into local communities, and we are working towards a national gender policy to bolster capacity within health systems, so as to better address gender-based violence. Those are only a few points in a much longer list of policy tools now on board, but policies and paper alone do not change the core indicators. We have much more to do.

Retaining skilled health specialists is a challenge in our efforts to make further progress on ensuring safe pregnancies and births. In achieving gender parity in education, boys and girls now both start out on the same footing, but that can be undone by high drop-out and pregnancy rates. Reproductive health is a key goal already being pursued through community and youth-peer organizations, but we need greater targeted support to ensure access to information health services and free and informed family planning decisions. Although we have made progress in senior positions in our civil service, we must strive to ensure that women are well-represented throughout society. We look forward to tomorrow's Climate Summit, as, for the Marshall Islands, climate change is our reality, and it will continue to have an impact on social development and progress across all sectors, in particular our future implementation of the global post-2015 agenda.

In the face of such global structures, small islands are too often left behind by the one-size-fits-all approaches to core social development that sometimes miss the mark in local communities, despite good intentions that are, unfortunately, often remote from our realities. Our recent global conference of small islands in Samoa was the high-water mark in the international understanding of small islands, but time and follow-up will reveal the results of existing partnerships, particularly with the United Nations system.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fulbert Amoussouga Gero, Minister in Charge of Coordination of the Implementation of Policies related to Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Gero (Benin) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the people and Government of Benin, I would like to congratulate Mr. Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

The Republic of Benin welcomes this special session, which has been convened to decide on the appropriate future course for the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Benin gives its support from the outset to the Secretary-General's report (A/69/62) on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the ICPD Programme of Action and the report on the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122), and has given its due attention to the issues they address.

The reports focus on the considerable progress made in pursuing the objectives laid out in the Programme of Action in various areas, in particular the recognition of the links between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development; the promotion of gender equality and the improvement of the status of women; the improvement of reproductive health; and good quality education for all. Alongside many other countries, Benin has not remained on the sidelines of the work by the international community to implement the decisions of the International Conference on Population and Development.

In fact, shortly after the ICPD was held in Cairo in 1994, Benin adopted its Declaration on Population Policy and established poverty reduction and growth strategies and national policies for the promotion of education, health and gender equity. Several laws and

regulations to improve the legal status of women have been developed and applied. Those measures have produced encouraging results, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, the reduction and suppression of high-risk behaviours, the management and control of HIV/AIDS, the suppression of sexual harassment, and victim protection. Benin has also achieved progress in combating violence against women, promoting the education of girls — whose enrolment rate increased by 108 per cent in 2011 — and promoting the empowerment and leadership of women.

However, that progress should not overlook the existence of many challenges related mainly to the management of the demographic dividend, the promotion of youth employment, the establishment of an effective social welfare system, the elimination of inequalities and violence against women and children, the promotion of research and development on tropical diseases, such as malaria and the Ebola virus epidemic, and the management of international migrations in order to gain the most benefit from them.

As we cope with those challenges, which also lie at the core of implementing the Millennium Development Goals, we note with satisfaction that the framework of actions submitted for our consideration deals in a coherent way and provides for sufficient resources to strengthen individual capacities and the resilience of populations. Bearing all of that in mind, Benin would like to join the community of nations and continue working with the framework of actions for the follow-up to the ICPD. I would like to take this opportunity to assure Member States of my country's determination to be fully committed to the implementation of the goals defined therein.

In conclusion, I would like to urge all other countries, in particular our partners from the North, to increase their financial and technical support for the implementation of the framework in order to pave the way towards achieving the goals of the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hisham Badr, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Badr (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and to express our appreciation for the convening of this special session on the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action

of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014. By focusing individual attention on a broader range of development themes than previous such conferences, that Conference has become a milestone in the history of international development cooperation and in linking population and development. It reflected the international community's growing awareness of the interrelationship between population, poverty, education and the environment, and its realization that those issues cannot be treated in isolation from other themes.

For that reason, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo was a turning point in addressing population and development. The Cairo Conference formulated a practical conceptualization of the international community's approach to dealing with population issues, which involved a shift from a quantitative emphasis on population statistics to a qualitative emphasis on individuals' needs, aspirations and rights. The Cairo 1994 Programme of Action also helped to establish the foundations for the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals, and has contributed over the past two decades to constructive efforts to reduce poverty and promote education and gender equality.

The 1994 Cairo outcome document can be viewed as a real accomplishment. It is a balanced and comprehensive document that has served up to the present as a reference point for population and development issues at the international level. Moreover, the Programme of Action of the ICPD Beyond 2014 is an indication of the consensus that was reached in Cairo.

On the national level, Egypt, with its more than 86 million inhabitants, is one of the most populated Arab countries. It is also one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. Consequently, Egypt views demographics as an issue of paramount importance. Article 41 of Egypt's new Constitution affirms that the population issue is the cornerstone of national plans for sustainable economic development. That commitment has been translated into an ambitious development plan, known as "Egypt 2030," which includes a population and development strategy whose various focal points reflect relevant national priorities. It includes the education of girls, the fight against early or forced marriage, women's empowerment, family planning and reproductive health. Those priorities are being pursued by focusing on youth, who constitute approximately two thirds of Egypt's population,

and who therefore could help the country to reap the benefits of population growth and serve as the driving force behind all development.

On the international level, Egypt affirms its commitment to carrying out the global periodic review of the work of the ICPD, and to formulating the best possible methods for carrying out what remains to be done under the Programme of Action. We intend to continue marshalling the necessary support for the goals of the Conference in various international forums and to make population issues a top priority on international development agendas. In that context, Egypt hosted the Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab States in Cairo in June 2013, which was aimed at assessing the progress made achieved towards implementing the Programme of Action. The Cairo Declaration on Population and Development of 2013 was adopted unanimously, which in turn made it possible to establish a united Arab position on the ICPD Beyond 2014. Egypt likewise played an effective role in the African Review Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, held in Addis Ababa in September 2013.

Programme implementation and follow-up cannot be discussed without addressing funding. That is why we call on our partners in development to continue cooperating with us by providing the necessary additional financing that developing countries need, through either bilateral or multilateral mechanisms. We also call on the private sector to strengthen the institutional capacity to implement the Cairo Programme of Action. In that context, I would like to refer to the second Conference on Financing for Development, which developing countries view as particularly important. In that regard, we are counting on our partners from developed countries to help us achieve its goals.

With regard to the elements of the Programme of Action, Egypt wishes to stress the sovereign right of States to implement the ICPD agenda in accordance with their national laws and development goals, with full respect for their peoples' religious values and cultural traditions and in conformity with international human rights charters and conventions.

Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed major changes, which saw the rise of new development challenges requiring the international community to establish sustainable consumption and production patterns. We hereby affirm the value of that great effort.

At the same time, we affirm the right of developing nations to pursue development as a fundamental, internationally recognized human right, but a right that can be exercised only with the requisite funding.

In conclusion, we are meeting today to give new life to the Programme of Action of the ICPD Beyond 2014. We are proud of the achievements already made, but we must be aware that we need to have a vision that takes due account of cultural specificities in order to strengthen what was adopted in Cairo. Only thus, with all of us acting together, will we be able to respond to the challenges of the future. I hope that everyone will be able to share in this common effort.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Henryka Mościcka-Dendys, Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Ms. Mościcka-Dendys (Poland): Let me express my Government's appreciation for the convening of this special session of the General Assembly, which aims to underscore both the progress achieved since 1994 and the significance of the necessary follow-up in the *ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report*.

It is clear that the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was a milestone in providing women with necessary protection and ensuring that gender equality is a global priority.^c We appreciate the fact that the Programme of Action focuses on activities aimed at combating various forms of discrimination. We regard the principle of equal treatment as a horizontal one, and therefore one that affects practically all social spheres of our everyday life.

We fully share the Secretary-General's view that achievements over the past 20 years have indeed been remarkable. They range from significant gains in women's equality and the health and life expectancy of the world's population to educational attainment and human rights protection systems. At the same time, we realize that, despite undeniable accomplishments, we are not at the end of the road yet. The path to sustainability will require better management and a more innovative approach towards protecting all persons from discrimination and violence, thereby allowing them to contribute to and benefit from development in its economic, social and environmental aspects.

The ICPD and its Programme of Action constitute an important social platform upon which my own Government has formulated and implemented many of its socioeconomic priorities. In Poland, the equal status of women and men is guaranteed by the Constitution. We believe that promoting equality and empowering women should be at the core of all national policies on combating violence. Poland has found it to be imperative. In 2010, we amended the law on combating family violence and, in 2013, we adopted the National Action Plan on Equal Treatment for 2013-2016, of which efforts to combat gender-based violence form an essential part. In recent years, we have also been working intensely on empowering and supporting the independence of women. We have changed provisions in the labour code, the family code and the electoral law. Since 2010, we have introduced quotas into candidate lists, thereby increasing the number of women in office and women's active participation in public life.

The Secretary-General points out in his report (A/69/62) that today national demographic trajectories are more diverse than in 1994. Poland finds itself faced with many challenges in that regard. According to forecasts, by 2030 the size of the Polish population will have decreased by 1.3 million people. Therefore, further negative changes in the age structure of the population and shortages in the labour market are to be expected. For those reasons, in 2012 my Government adopted in a strategy on migration policy, which aims at adjusting the migration policy scenarios to labour market needs and the competitiveness of the Polish economy. Simultaneously, we undertook several initiatives aimed at ensuring better conditions for reconciling professional and family lives.

All Polish citizens, regardless of their social or economic situation, by law enjoy the right to health protection and equal access to publicly financed health-care services. Special State protection is granted to women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. An important part of the State health policy focuses on reproductive health. A particularly important programme in that field pertains to infertility treatment via in-vitro fertilization, which covers the period 2013-2016.

A significant improvement has also been made in school curriculums for youth by including in teaching programmes education about family planning and sexual life. We also contribute substantially to international efforts aimed at improving and strengthening sexual

and reproductive health and rights, as defined in the ICPD. Together with our international partners, we are fighting against female genital mutilation and actively support efforts to prevent and treat fistula.

We fully share the view that, thanks to the ICPD and its Programme of Action, much progress has been achieved. Still, there is no single country in the world that could not do more and better in this regard. We believe that the United Nations should continue to focus on supporting the least developed countries of the world. It is also our view that international assistance constitutes a significant, but rather secondary, factor in effectively assisting countries in need. The prime responsibility for sustainable development lies with national Governments.

Poland remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights. We also wholeheartedly support the complex and effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Giampaolo Cantini, Director General for Development Cooperation of Italy.

Mr. Cantini (Italy): I would like, first of all, to express my delegation's congratulations to the President on convening this special session to mark the twentieth anniversary of the holding of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Held in Cairo in 1994, the Conference adopted by consensus a Programme of Action that set long-term universal goals, linking population dynamics, global health, human rights, gender equality and sustainable development.

The progress made over the past two decades is very well illustrated in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), as well as in the index report on the interactive debate at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122). Italy welcomes both documents, with their analytical approach focusing on individual dignity, human rights and equality. The ICPD Programme of Action highlighted the relationship between gender inequality and poverty, poor health, poor educational

attainment and the need for sustainable economic development. It recognized that women and young people are often less able to access their human rights and less likely to gain from the benefits of economic development and urged countries to focus more on the needs of women and young people.

Italy is pleased to have contributed to the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review, which revealed considerable progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. For example, the number of those living in extreme poverty in developing countries has decreased from 47 per cent to 22 per cent, which means that about 1 billion people now enjoy improved living conditions; a considerable decline in mortality rates was recorded in most countries; a legal minimum age for marriage at or above 18 years has been adopted in 158 countries; and a greater number of countries do a better job of protecting the human rights of migrants, leveraging the benefits of migration for global development.

Despite the significant gains in poverty reduction and economic growth, more collective and individual efforts are required to address the remaining challenges to combat poverty, ensure equality and equity and protect the environment for future generations. The findings of the review show a world with uneven growth, both in income and wealth, where many people still experience significant barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Those issues require our special attention in defining the appropriate policies and allocating the necessary human and financial resources. Of particular relevance is the need to ensure that the largest ever generation of adolescents and youths will receive a proper education, as well as to care for their specific health needs. Similarly, ageing people are an emerging reality, which has social and economic implications involving the need to ensure adequate responses. The empowerment of women and girls and gender equality remain unfulfilled, and gender-based violence is still widespread.

The impact of population dynamics can be seen at different levels and in various contexts. Therefore, a sound response requires the integration of demographic dynamics into development planning at the national, regional and international levels. Governments can be more effective in planning their national strategies when they have access to comprehensive and reliable statistics and trend analyses. But findings in the reports

show that the capacity to collect, monitor and project population dynamics continues to be weak. We need to strengthen international action to ensure more effective and efficient collection and analysis of population data.

Italy believes that strategic responses to population and development challenges require the systematic, coordinated and active contributions of all the relevant stakeholders, including Governments, civil society, academic institutions, the private sector and international organizations. In that context, the United Nations, and the United Nations Population Fund in particular, can play a leadership role in forging stronger partnerships. The future development agenda will bring renewed attention to social, economic and environment sustainability. We call for the inclusion of the main findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report and the regional review outcomes in the post-2015 development agenda.

Italy reaffirms the relevance of the principles of the agenda that emerged from 1994 Cairo Conference, and its support for accelerating the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014 and for the vision presented in the Secretary-General's report. We believe that those principles and documents represent a sound framework for fully responding to the needs and challenges of a world population, which is projected to reach almost 9 billion by 2030, so that all individuals and all countries will have an opportunity to realize their full potential.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Fernando Bolaños, Vice-Minister of Vulnerable Populations of Peru.

Mr. Bolaños (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express the greetings of the Government of Peru to all participants in this twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly on the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, which coincides with the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994.

We reaffirm our commitment to and support for the ICPD Programme of Action and its five-year reviews. In addition, we remain politically committed to the objectives of the post-2015 development agenda. The Peruvian State recognizes the vital importance of the Montevideo Consensus, a policy instrument resulting from the first Conference on Population and

Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Montevideo in 2013, which affirms our obligation to advance the protection and exercise of women's and men's human rights. At present, Peru is a country that has been increasingly promoting policies of social inclusion.

In the past 12 years, the total poverty rate in Peru has declined 30 per cent as a result of sustained economic growth, which has enabled a better quality of life for the population, especially the poorest segment. One of the most relevant factors leading to the reduction in poverty has been the increase in public spending on social programmes through targeted interventions. The following are some of the policies and programmes that are worth noting in various sectors and demonstrate the commitment and political will of Peru.

We adopted a national human rights action plan for the period 2014-2016, in which Peru is committed to introduce the mainstreaming of human rights and a gender focus into public policies. A new health policy has promoted an increase in free sexual and reproductive health services and has given attention to establishing health-care facilities, including cultural appropriateness and vertical birthing and the construction of homes for mothers-to-be, with community participation. Our multisectoral implementation plan to prevent teen pregnancy, covering the period 2013-2021, emphasizes that comprehensive sex education should be integrated into schools and access to information and support should be provided for adolescents. After the 1990s, a guide to therapeutic abortion was adopted, in accordance with the Constitution and current laws, in order to reduce maternal deaths.

The implementation of our national plan of action for children and adolescents for the period 2012-2021 coordinates efforts at all levels of Government. Programmes have also been developed aimed at restoring the rights of children and adolescents, in the context of the Yachay Wasi programme, which serves homeless children. The family welfare programme provides temporary shelter for families in cases of risk and neglect, and the life programme, Digna, serves abandoned older adults who live in the street.

We have created programmes to prevent, punish and eliminate violence against women and have expanded emergency centres, a free emergency hotline and women's shelters. To strengthen those actions, Peru has enacted six laws that improve the protection of the rights of women, including the extension of maternity

leave in certain cases and the prevention, punishment and eradication of femicide. We are developing significant protocols and campaigns to address human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

The Peruvian Government has committed itself to the promotion of specialized policies to benefit indigenous and native peoples, including an official database on all indigenous populations in Peru, using the new Census of Indigenous Communities of the Peruvian Amazon. Peru, in enacting the law on the right to informed consent in respect of indigenous or native populations, with its accompanying regulations, became the first country in the region to create legal instruments to comply with the 1989 International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 — the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

Peru is and will remain committed to population policies that promote human rights and the five pillars established in the framework of actions, which cover human rights, health, sustainability, governance and accountability. In that way, we seek to live up to the national motto coined at the foundation of our Republic: “Steadfast and happy through union”. We believe that all Peruvian men and women, as well as all inhabitants of the planet, have the right to full development and happiness. We must continue working towards that goal.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Martin Dahinden, State Secretary of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Dahinden (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): It is with great enthusiasm that we participate in this unique occasion to commemorate the consensus achieved 20 years ago at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). That Conference marked a decisive change, which took the form of the Cairo Programme of Action. It put women’s rights and their well-being at the centre. Experience shows us that women’s empowerment, the education of girls and access to information and services on sexual and reproductive health care and rights are key. If we give priority to those factors, it will have a very positive influence on the evolution of the population and on sustainable development. Switzerland strongly reaffirms its adherence to the vision that puts the rights of women and human well-being at the centre of population and development issues. We remain convinced that such an approach is key to bringing about real change and

for improving the lives of millions of women, girls and other disadvantaged people.

We have reached the end of a process of intensive and exhaustive review. Thanks to the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action, we have a comprehensive view of our progress and of the remaining challenges. We heartily welcome the lessons and recommendations contained in the documents on the regional conferences and the two reports of the Secretary-General (A/69/62 and A/69/122). Together, they provide a valuable basis for guiding future action.

Despite the progress made over 20 years, the review noted significant inequalities and exclusions, and our future efforts must better take into account the most vulnerable people. Much remains to be done to achieve gender equality and autonomy for women and girls, ensure sexual and reproductive health and related rights for all, reduce maternal mortality and respond to the new challenges linked to population dynamics. To that end, the acceleration of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and taking the review’s recommendations into consideration are a priority for Switzerland nationally and in terms of international cooperation.

This special session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when we have the largest generation of young people that the world has ever seen. It is our duty to support them so that they may exercise their rights, have an opportunity to develop their potential and play a decisive role in advancing our societies, both now and in the future. It is therefore imperative to address the remaining challenges in the implementation of the Programme of Action. We should prioritize quality education and capacity-building, all the while addressing the disparities between the sexes. At the same time, young people should be able to make informed decisions about their future. Access to information and to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as related rights, including full sex education, play an essential role in that regard. Adolescent girls and young women in particular should be able to finish their schooling and professional training without being faced with early or forced marriages, early pregnancy or violence.

Today, it is our important duty to learn from the past and commit ourselves to a better future. Sustainable development depends on the implementation of the Programme of Action and on taking the key steps necessary for its implementation beyond 2014.

Furthermore, we have a unique opportunity during the coming year to anchor the themes linked to the challenges of the ICPD in the United Nations post-2015 development agenda.

This is a unique opportunity to fill ourselves with the spirit that guided the revolutionary consensus of 1994 and, armed with that visionary will, to forge ahead in drawing up the instrument that will allow us to eradicate poverty, discrimination and inequality, and make sustainable development accessible to all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Somchit Inthamith, Vice-Minister of Planning and Investment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Inthamith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): It is my great honour to participate in the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/62) and the index report on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (see A/69/122). The issues addressed in the reports are extremely relevant to our country as we advance towards graduating from least-developed-country status by the year 2020 and towards reaching middle-income-country status. The Lao Government has set in motion several strategic actions, including the five-year health sector reform plan, pro-poor policies to provide free maternity care services, a health insurance pilot scheme covering maternal health, the Education for All National Plan, an adolescent and youth situation analysis that will form the basis of a multisectoral action plan, and a national action plan on violence against women.

Similarly, as a country facing rapid socioeconomic changes with increasing migration and a youthful demography, we see the importance of planning and building sustainable cities and strengthening urban-rural linkages and partnerships. In addition, given the importance of data collection, analysis and dissemination, the Lao Government has implemented a strategy for the development of a national statistical system, which covers the period 2010-2020. Next year, we will conduct a population and housing census, which will be of great importance for socioeconomic development. In that regard, we would like to seek

support from the international community and our development partners.

We are of the view that strategic responses to development challenges require the systematic and active participation of all stakeholders, as well as partnership and global leadership through the United Nations. We agree that population dynamics have to be integrated into development planning at national, regional and international levels. In that regard, we recognize the importance of the ICPD Programme of Action for the achievement of national development priorities and confirm that considerable progress has been made. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of a few least developed countries that has improved life expectancy drastically, from 54 years to 68 years — which surpasses the world average — since the ICPD two decades ago.

However, we note that more needs to be done to ensure the well-being of all our people and to achieve sustainable development. That includes increasing investment in young people and strengthening their participation in decision-making and planning; promoting programmes to keep girls in school and to respond to violence against women and girls; addressing unmet needs for family planning, especially for young people; and increasing the efforts to ensure equitable development and economic growth.

Let me conclude by reiterating our support for and cooperation with the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, taking into account the outcome of our regional review and the findings and recommendations of the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review, and by calling for population issues to be further addressed and comprehensively elaborated in the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Tom Alweendo, Director General of the National Planning Commission of Namibia.

Mr. Alweendo (Namibia): Twenty years ago, world leaders met in Cairo to address the challenges of population and development. They agreed on measures and actions to be taken by national Governments and the international community. They underscored the imperative that Governments should integrate population issues as part and parcel of sustainable development, thereby placing people at the centre of development programmes.

Namibia welcomes the opportunity to participate in this landmark event, which provides a platform for reviewing current policy options and considering ways and means to enhance our resolve to address the challenges of implementing the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

While considerable progress has been made since the Conference in Cairo, challenges still remain. We should therefore recommit ourselves to addressing those challenges. This event also provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to work towards a new global agenda and to identify measures that would ensure that population and development issues are incorporated as an integral part of the global post-2015 development agenda.

Namibia reaffirms its commitment to key international instruments that we have ratified, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the dignity and equality of all humankind. In order to ensure that the health-related Millennium Development Goals are successfully achieved, Namibia launched the campaign for accelerated reduction in maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. We have also developed policies in key areas of population, reproductive health and gender equality. We have further adopted a maternal child health road map, as well as a gender-based violence action plan, to specifically address the plight of vulnerable women and rights.

Our national efforts, together with support from development cooperation partners, have resulted in positive impacts on many aspects of population and development in the country. Those include improvements and an expansion in the availability of family planning services and result in a reduction in the fertility ratio from 4.2 to 3.6 children per woman. That makes Namibia one of the countries with the lowest fertility rate in the southern African region. Furthermore, Namibia has also witnessed a decline in teenage pregnancies, as well as improved access to sexual and reproductive information. Available statistics indicate a significant reduction in HIV infection prevalence. Today more than 81 per cent of Namibian women deliver their babies in health facilities.

In line with the Abuja Commitments on financing, Namibia continues to progressively expand the share of domestic resources that are allocated to the health sector. That currently stands at more than 10 per cent

of our annual budget. Although progress has been made, we recognize that many more challenges need to be overcome. Among those are the need to integrate sexual and reproductive health services with an emphasis on gender responsiveness and meeting human rights standards, to accelerate the reduction of maternal and child mortality and morbidity, to empower women and take effective measures to address gender-based violence, to promote the roll-out of initiatives aimed at achieving the goal of zero new infections of HIV, to further reduce unplanned and teenage pregnancies and for sustained and continued coordination and dialogue between all stakeholders towards improved and sustainable socioeconomic development.

As we move beyond 2014, Namibia will continue to mobilize the necessary technical and financial resources and strengthen coordination and monitoring systems in the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Deng Yai, Minister of the Environment of the Republic of South Sudan.

Mr. Deng Yai (South Sudan): The Republic of South Sudan wishes to take this opportunity to welcome the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), as well as the index report on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (A/69/122). We are pleased to have contributed to the global survey for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014 review.

We are acutely aware of the challenges that still remain to improve the quality of lives of all our people, to ensure equality and equity and protect the environment for succeeding generations. We therefore share the urgency of the findings of the review, which show that, despite significant gains in poverty reduction and economic growth since the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, many have been left behind, lacking fulfilment of basic needs, meaningful employment and access to social protection or public services, such as health and education.

There is no doubt that there are still significant barriers for many people to enjoy their human rights. Those issues, as well as the conclusion that the current

state of income and wealth inequality is unsustainable, threatens future economic growth and the cohesion and security of societies. We note that the report addresses comprehensively ways to enhance individual capabilities and resilience and ensure sustainable development. We share the conclusion of the report that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity is the foundation of sustainable development.

The increasing wealth and income inequalities; unfulfilled gender equality and empowerment of women; the need for lifelong learning and building of human capacities, especially for young people; and the need to address the inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services have significant implications for development policy. Similarly, increasingly diverse household structures and living arrangements require us to plan and build sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages. The impact of population dynamics on the micro and macro levels also requires the integration of population dynamics into development planning at the national, regional and international levels.

We agree that the development challenges we face today require the systematic participation of all stakeholders in crafting responses to those challenges that require partnership and global leadership through the United Nations. In that regard, we are pleased to reiterate our support, expressed in the context of the Africa regional review, of the implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014 where we joined in the adoption of the regional plan of action, the 2014 Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014.

We are fully committed to furthering the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD by taking into account the outcome of the Africa regional review and the findings and recommendations of the ICPD beyond 2014 review. We therefore call for the inclusion of the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report and the regional review outcomes in the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, the Republic of South Sudan is proud to join the international community in reaffirming its commitment to and support for the historic ICPD Programme of Action, as well as for the transformational vision presented in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmad Jan Naeem, Deputy Minister for Public Health of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Naeem (Afghanistan): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, where, at its forty-seventh session, it decided to convene this very important special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. We also congratulate the United Nations Population Fund and all other United Nations bodies that have supported the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) follow-up sessions. My delegation also extends its full cooperation and support for a meaningful discussion and substantive outcome of this session.

Afghanistan, in cooperation with international community, has made significant achievements in different fields, including democracy during the past 12 years. We have had presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections. The participation of the people of Afghanistan during the recent presidential elections was phenomenal. The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan announced His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, as President-elect of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan yesterday. Afghanistan is pleased to have contributed to the global survey on ICPD beyond 2014 review and to note that we have made considerable progress in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62), as well as the index report (see A/69/122) on the interactive debate of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Afghanistan has been actively involved in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and regional and international conferences on the follow-up of the ICPD Programme of Action. Afghanistan has developed a reproductive health strategy for 2012 to 2016 in line with the ICPD Programme of Action. At the same time, a health and human rights strategy, guidelines on medical ethics and a patient charter have been developed.

The net enrollment ratio in primary education was 54 per cent in 2003 and 77 per cent by 2012. The target for 2015 is 82 per cent. We are on track to achieve the target of 100 per cent by 2020, which is the Millennium Development Goal target for Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a State party to most of the core international treaties, conventions and protocols on human rights and remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. In line with the ICPD Programme of Action, the National Plan of Action for the Women of Afghanistan 2008-2017 has been developed. Women occupy one fourth of Government jobs and their participation in decision-making has increased. Currently, 27 per cent of the legislators in the Afghan Parliament are women. We are experiencing similar trends when it comes to law enforcement and the judiciary.

A multisectoral national youth policy has been developed with special attention to youth participation, education, employment and health. Special attention has been focused on youth participation in peace, reconciliation and in policy and programme development.

Unfortunately, security is still a challenge, inter alia, causing internal migration from rural areas to urban centres. To address the situation, the Government of Afghanistan is committed to improving living arrangements and household structures.

Afghanistan is still facing the great challenge of its refugees, mostly living in the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran. We are thankful to them for their hospitality. We also believe in dignity and the voluntary return of Afghan refugees. Therefore, having peace and creating conditions for sustainable development in Afghanistan provides a durable solution to the issues of refugees and overall development in Afghanistan.

We have more than 40 private television channels and more than 100 radio stations, besides the printed media. We believe that, through those developments, we can have a strong and vibrant civil society and strong citizens' voices, which are not only important, but also an integral part of democracy.

Allow me to conclude my statement by noting that this special session has been a great success and a contribution to efforts in the international arena for the realization of international human rights for the world population. But the notion of respect for

different cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are also important for our greater success. Therefore, it is important for all of us to work together for a better human life, while respecting the views and beliefs of each other.

Afghanistan is committed to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in collaboration and cooperation with families; communities and national, regional and international stakeholders. We will do that while respecting religion and national laws to achieve sustainable development and realize the human rights of all Afghans. My delegation believes that we will achieve a fruitful outcome of the special session with the consensus of all Member States.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mr. Valentin Rybakov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The secret to the success of the agreements reached in Cairo is the fact that they are based on respect for national specificities and traditions. Unfortunately, despite the efforts made and the progress achieved, the international community has still not resolved many of the issues in the Programme of Action. Early marriages still occur and abortion is being used as a method of contraception. Profound socioeconomic inequality and irresponsible parenthood are still major impediments to the well-being of society.

Furthermore, the world has also encountered new challenges that may hinder the future development of civilization. Today it is fashionable to promote so-called sexual rights as universal human rights — to promote gender identity, same-sex marriages and the right for same-sex couples to adopt children. All that is often based on a dangerous ideology which could destroy the family — the foundation of society. The same tactic is also being used to stir up controversy and forcefully impose certain behavioural models that are not supported around the world.

Unfortunately, it is the family that is most vulnerable to the negative factors in the areas of demography and development. Those factors are eroding the institution of the family and undermining and replacing traditional family values. The family is the cornerstone of society, as is stated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The family is the linchpin of a strong and prosperous State. It is through the family that States achieve their national priorities in the areas of

demographics and development. A traditional family is a necessary condition for the solid upbringing and development of future generations.

Strengthening the institution of the family is a key policy priority for Belarus. The provision of financial support for families and the strengthening of the links between generations are the unshakeable foundations of Belarus' family policy. States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations recognize the importance of the goals and objectives of the International Conference on Population and Development in the post-2015 development agenda. We agree that they must be fully reflected in the sustainable development goals.

Belarus believes that, in developing the future development agenda, it is essential to take a balanced approach in addressing the issues of access to high-quality health care and education, ensuring employment and ensuring that basic needs are fully met. To effectively implement the Cairo agreements beyond 2014, all partners must focus their efforts on maintaining and supporting traditional family values and must not allow the institution of the family to be eroded. The traditional family should not be considered outdated or in need of modernization. Belarus welcomes the efforts of partner States and non-governmental organizations to promote the interests and priorities of the traditional family in the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Mr. Melessie (International Planned Parenthood Federation): I thank the President for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I am honoured to be here to talk about the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the regional review and the role that it must play in the post-2015 agenda, on behalf of civil society organizations around the world, especially non-governmental organizations. The International Planned Parenthood Federation works in over 172 countries.

I would like to talk about hope. I say hope because when I visited the rehabilitation centre where we are assisting women who are commercial sex workers and drug addicts, I asked the women, "If you were God for one hour, what would you do?" One lady said, "I would give hope, because when you have hope, you have peace, prosperity and a dream on which to build."

Hope is what the Programme of Action gave to many people around the globe. At its core, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is about hope and people's basic right to dignity. It is about a father being able to see his daughter grow up safe and free. It is about support for women in starting their families, if and when they chose to, so that they do not die when giving life. It is about young people being able to chose who and when to marry and being able to complete their schooling, gain employment, support their families and serve the society they aspire to serve.

The ICPD is about the future — a future in which we to build peace, prosperity and human dignity for us and our children and the grandchildren who are coming. For the first time, 20 years ago when the Programme of Action was introduced, we saw the world come together to make a commitment to protect the dignity of humankind, individuals and families and their freedom with regard to their sexual and reproductive health and rights so that they would not to be coerced to undergo pain and suffer until death. It showed that humankind had more in common than it had differences. We may look diverse and varied in culture, colour and political system, but we have come together in order to share in our common dignity, individual freedom and liberty. Humankind is at the centre of our international framework — not trade, finance or business, because business needs us and needs a humankind that is full of hope and dignity.

Twenty years ago the Assembly made a commitment to the ICPD and built on it. Young people are now recognized as active stakeholders of society — which cannot be denied, because they are connected and communicating. The legal definitions of sexual reproductive health and rights are advancing. Comprehensive sexual education is seen as making meaningful change in promoting gender equity and equality. After 20 years, it is time to develop it further and recognize that individuality and collective prosperity. We must not go back, like we did in 2000, and waste seven years to get target 5B, on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Two million women in the developing world want to control their fertility but cannot do it. For the 14 million girls who are married before they turn 18 and for the young woman from Liberia who told me "I want a place where girls will be happy", somewhere where we can get help to prevent teenage pregnancy, be shown how to have a good life and be happy and have

a future” that is what equality and rights is about. It is not about meetings or empty words. It is about showing commitment to the lives of women and girls, their ability to stay in school, their ability to bear healthy children whom they care for and love and their ability to play in a park in their communities and societies. When I talk to women in my region — women in every region — it is clear that the future they want is here, but today humankind faces a challenge.

The ICPD regional reviews highlighted where we need to go, and the post-2015 framework is on the horizon. It is essential that the reviews, including the index report (see A/69/PV.122), be integrated into the next development framework and into the Secretary-General’s index report on post-2015. When we strengthen the ICPD, we will support the goal of sustainable development and women and girls will be at the centre of development.

The Acting President: I encourage speakers to please adhere to the time limit. There are others who would like to speak, and the night is almost ending. Please stick to three minutes, or we will have to ask you to conclude.

I now give the floor to Mr. Peter Mangiti, Principal Secretary for Devolution and Planning of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Mangiti (Kenya): Kenya has made great strides in achieving the goals of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). However, as the end of the past 20 years draws near, we realize that there is still much more to be done.

Like most developing countries, Kenya has a youthful population. According to our latest population census, in 2009, 63 per cent of Kenya’s population is under the age of 25. We do not see that youth bulge as a liability, but rather as an opportunity. As Kenya continues to invest in education, health and infrastructure for economic growth, a young population that is highly skilled, educated and healthy will enable us to reap the demographic dividends. Another characteristic of our population dynamics is rapid urbanization. Our projections indicate that, more than half of Kenya’s population will reside in urban areas by 2030. Those imminent realities are the reason why Kenya supports the adoption of the ICPD beyond 2014.

Since the 1994 Cairo meeting, Kenya has taken major steps to implement the ICPD Programme of Action. The most notable of those is the development

of the National Population Policy of 2012. The policy won the Aspen Resolve Award from the Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health and is hailed as a model for other developing countries. The policy aims at raising the national contraceptive prevalence to 70 per cent by 2030, reducing the total fertility rate from 4.6 in 2009 to 3 in 2030, raising life expectancy and lowering child and maternal mortalities.

Other achievements between 1979 and 2009 include a reduction in Kenya’s population growth rate from a peak of 3.9 per cent per year to 2.9 per cent, a reduction in the fertility rate from 8.1 births per woman to 4.6, and a reduction in the infant mortality rate from 88 deaths per 1,000 live births to 52. Another notable achievement is the reduction by half in the national HIV prevalence rate, from 13.5 per cent in 1998 to 5.6 in 2013. In 2013, the Government took further measures to improve those indicators by introducing free maternity services in all public health facilities.

To deal with the challenges of rapid urbanization resulting from increased rural-urban migration, in 2011 Kenya developed an urban development policy and put in place a programme for upgrading informal settlements, which are estimated to house about 60 per cent of the urban population.

At this stage, I wish to highlight what Kenya has done to implement the ICPD Programme of Action under the 2010 Constitution. Its efforts include legal provisions under the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act of 2010, the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011 and the labour migration policy of 2011.

In the area of reproductive health, the Constitution guarantees the provision of reproductive health services for all Kenyans. It also guarantees gender equality, equity and empowerment of women, which are part of the ICPD Programme and the Millennium Development Goals. Concrete initiatives are being implemented to facilitate the empowerment of youth, women and persons with disabilities to enable them to lead full and productive lives.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Kenya supports an extension of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action. As always, the United Nations and the international community can count on Kenya as a partner in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014. Together we will succeed.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Gisele Ngondo, Director of the Cabinet

of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Ngondo (Congo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to commend the holding of this special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. We consider this evaluation very timely, at a moment when we are engaged in defining a better future for the world after 2015 and — with respect to the African continent, 50 years after our independence — for the Africa we want by 2063.

As we know, the value of today's meeting lies in the opportunity it offers to provide a collective response to a very timely issue, that of the rapid growth in world population. According to a UNICEF report published on 12 August, 40 per cent of the world's children under 5 years of age will live on the African continent, where the population is expected to double over the coming 35 years and will account for 40 per cent of world population by the end of the century. In light of that overview, Africa merits particular attention. The challenge we face is how to ensure the demographic transition by making that rapid growth not a risk, but an opportunity to be seized.

On 26 July 2013, in Addis Ababa, during the review process for ICPD Beyond 2014, African countries took stock of the situation. The African Common Position, adopted on that occasion, will enable us to exploit the demographic dividend through more effective tools and a systematic, comprehensive and integrated approach to population and development issues. We hope that that will inform the discussions that are under way on shaping the ICPD Programme beyond 2014 and will contribute to the post-2015 development agenda for the African continent. The population and development debate and current discussions on the future global development agenda give us the opportunity to reaffirm our unreserved support for the ICPD Programme of Action with a view to achieving our national development priorities.

With a little over 4 million inhabitants in an area of 342,000 square kilometres, the Congo could be considered underpopulated. However, its annual population growth rate of nearly 3 per cent is considered high. Indeed, the country is going through a phase of very high population growth, as shown by the quadrupling of its population. That growth has

implications for development policies. One of the major challenges, as in most developing countries experiencing a population boom, is how to manage the population growth in relation to poverty, population flows and intergenerational balance. The ongoing improvement of the economic and financial situation in the Congo over the past few years has provided the country with important assets and enabled it to deal with the main development challenges confronting it.

I will make specific mention here of our efforts for the empowerment of women and young people and for gender equality. We have undertaken to maximize the benefits of the demographic dividend by investing in the creation of opportunities and establishing an environment favourable to innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, so that young people can create jobs and fully realize their potential.

The reality of the world in which we live today calls for us all to work together for a future that meets the aspirations of each of us. Beyond our collective commitment, let us not lose sight of the fact that the successful implementation of the development agenda on a global scale depends largely on strong partnerships. This special session gives us the opportunity to pursue further, and more effectively, the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.

As some demographers say, there is no purely demographic solution to development problems, but neither will there be development without taking demographic factors into account.

The Acting President: In accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 67/250 of 21 February 2013, I now give the floor to the representative of the Red de Salud de Mujeres Lationamericanas y del Caribe.

Ms. Vélez (Red de Salud de Mujeres Lationamericanas y del Caribe) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am speaking on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean Civil Society Organizations in considering the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Global Review.

Two decades after the ICPD, strengthened by the presence of a more diverse movement and new actors, we come together at the United Nations to review the progress achieved on the ICPD Programme of Action and, above all, to support a process that has been taking place here over the past three years.

We were there. We are here. As Latin American and Caribbean women, we have been present at every stage of the process, from the evaluations and thematic or expert meetings to the main tables, hallways and cafeterias where so often discussions take place and agreements are reached. We have been present at the global, regional and national levels, convinced that sexual and reproductive rights, dignity, equality and non-discrimination for women in all their diversity is an undeferable agenda for any society that seeks to live in peace and build sustainable democratic development.

We were there. We are here. We hope that this review process has helped the world leaders here today to recommit to the most important part of any debate on development, and that is people — the millions of women and men of all ages, whether indigenous, white or of African descent, of diverse sexual orientations and identities and various occupations. We hope it has already helped in the recognition that without dignity, without rights, without education and room for all women, no development is possible.

We were there, and we are here again once again to recall that, despite advances in policies relating to rights, millions of women live under laws criminalizing their decisions about reproductive choices and thousands continue to die from preventable causes related to maternity. We were there, and we are here again to denounce that.

What is preventing us from advancing further and faster? What do the kidnapping of 200 girls in Nigeria, femicide in Mexico or Jamaica, the total criminalization of abortion in Nicaragua, child marriages in South Asia, the millions of infibulated women or the unbelievable numbers of women killed by their partners in Spain, the United States or Colombia have in common? It is called patriarchy, and it sustains the system that supports exclusion, racism, sexism, homophobia and fundamentalism of all kinds.

Therefore, as Latin American and Caribbean women, as feminists from all areas of our continent, we will fight for the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development to become a reality for all women, and for secular societies in which public policies and the most intimate decisions about reproduction are not determined by the dominant — or only — moral framework. We will continue to fight so that the Cairo agenda is fully implemented.

We were there, and we are here, and we will not allow that to be forgotten. My body, my territory.

The Acting President: In accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 67/250 of 21 February 2013, I now give the floor to the representative of Action Health Incorporated.

Ms. Nyambura (Action Health Incorporated): It is a privilege to address the Assembly today on behalf of the organizations that make up the Africa Civil Society Coalition on Population and Development.

On the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action — a paradigm shift that placed human rights and individual dignity at the heart of development — Africa has much to celebrate with regard to the progress we have made. Despite that progress, much still remains to be done to give our people a better future.

I am from Kenya, and I will tell you about Fatouma, a girl of 16 years of age from Nakuru. Fatouma has suffered unimaginable pain. At her age, she has undergone multiple violations, from when she was forced to undergo female genital mutilation to when she was brutally raped and infected with HIV. As we gather here today, Fatouma struggles to forget her past and find resonance with her new future, but the odds are against her, and not just her. The odds of living a decent and fulfilled life are against millions of adolescent girls on the African continent. Approximately 3.3 million girls in Africa are at risk of female genital mutilation each year. The reality of an African girl child is that of possible child marriage and high risk of obstetric fistula and death resulting from pregnancy.

On this historic occasion, we, the African Civil Society Coalition on Population and Development, implore Member States to adopt the recommendations from the ICPD Beyond 2014 review and ensure its full implementation, with emphasis on these three key areas. First is investment in our adolescents and young people in order to reap the demographic dividend. Africa is currently the youngest continent, with more than 70 per cent of our population below the age of 35. We must therefore invest in their education, health and well-being. Second is guaranteed access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for all without distinction. Third is implementation of the commitments contained in the African Common Position and ensuring that those commitments and the

findings and recommendations of the ICPD Beyond 2014 are reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

We are at a defining moment, and we have the opportunity to determine the Africa and the world we want, to change the course of history and to give Fatouma what is rightfully hers: dignity, equality and equity.

The Acting President: In accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 67/250 of 21 February 2013, I now give the floor to the representative of the Asia Pacific Resource Centre for Women.

Ms. Thanenthiran (Asia Pacific Resource Centre for Women): It is a privilege to be able to speak at this seminal event commemorating and reaffirming the commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the framework of actions beyond 2014. What I am going to present is a shorter version of my statement. I hope that all here will read the full statement, which will be online.

We must be cognizant of the fact that sexual and reproductive health and rights are inextricable from economic, social, cultural and political rights and must be recognized as necessary ingredients to achieving gender equality and sustainable development. Why are sexual and reproductive rights a prerequisite for equality, especially gender equality? Three core elements that embody the concept of sexual and reproductive rights are integral to individual autonomy: to freely decide on matters of sexuality and reproduction, to have the right to consent, and to have bodily integrity.

Every individual must have the right to decide whom we love, whom we have consensual relations with and when, and whom we enter into marriage with and when. We must have the right to decide how many children to have, if at all, when to have them, and how frequently. We must have the right to a life free from discrimination and violence.

We also call attention to the fact that sexual and reproductive health and rights do not exist in isolation, the full realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all being severely affected by the intersection of persisting inequalities and new and emerging issues such as food security, food sovereignty, climate change and rising religious fundamentalisms, all of which work to undermine the progress made thus far.

This is a point of time in history that enables Governments and citizens to renegotiate the social contract in our societies and to reimagine a world of possibility, of promise and, most importantly, of hope. We are heartened that those challenges are fully recognized by the report of the Secretary-General on the framework of actions for the follow up to the Programme of Action to the ICPD beyond 2014 (A/69/62), and welcome the fact that Governments have committed to recognizing those gaps and challenges at the regional population conferences, which have resulted in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the sixth Asian and Pacific Declaration on Population and Development from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014 from the Economic Commission for Africa. We hope that Governments and all stakeholders will unequivocally support the regional outcome documents and the report of the Secretary-General on the framework of actions to accelerate the full achievement of the vision of the ICPD Programme of Action and take it into the post-2015 era.

We call for universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including access to a full range of contraceptive methods; safe abortion services; counselling; quality treatment, including empathetic and trained health service providers; and comprehensive sexuality education provided across different settings. We also call for a rights-based continuum of quality care for sexual and reproductive health.

Further, we call on Member States and the international community to ensure the universality of sexual and reproductive rights and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services, with a particular focus on marginalized groups, including women, adolescents, young people, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural women, migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, people living in contexts of disaster, war and conflict and displaced and stateless persons, amongst others, in line with existing international commitments and conventions.

Human beings and the full realization of their human rights — recognized, attested to and signed

on by all Member States present here — must be the goal of any development framework that aims to create a more equal, equitable, just and sustainable world. Nothing less will do.

The Acting President: In accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 67/250 of 21 February 2013, I now give the floor to the representative of the Global Youth Action Network.

Ms. Abu Lail (Global Youth Action Network): It is my honour to be here today in this Hall. I am speaking today as a member of the Youth Leadership Working Group for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 2014 and as a young Arab activist on youth and adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We are living in an era in which those of us under the age of 30 make up 3.5 billion of the total world population. We are living in an era when resources are diminishing, security is scaling up, progress on development agendas is slow and young people are seen as an opportunity for economic growth rather than rights-holders.

While recent studies show that investment in youth is a must and not a luxury, investment in youth and safeguarding their rights should not just be a sentence in a speech, but an actual effort with an actual impact for the sake of the present before the future. However, the rights of young people are not taken seriously, hampering their abilities to realize their full potential. Tokenism is still an everyday reality. Our rights and voice need to be acknowledged in order to reach meaningful youth participation. We need to be taken seriously in every single stage of the decision-making processes.

How long will we carry on trying to justify gender-based violence with excuses based on culture and religion? Gender-based violence must be seriously addressed, including all acts of sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking in people and violence against sexual minorities. Where is the problem with having information? Knowledge is power, is it not? That is what they taught me in school, at least. So why is it taboo when it comes to my own body? Evidence has shown time and again the great benefit of comprehensive sexual education. We are talking about life-saving information here, so let us use it.

Does the violence and killing we see daily on television screens and on social media desensitize us

to what is going on? The massive violations of human rights in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Palestine and other regions of the world take their toll on the population of young people, and young people are particularly affected. They bear the consequences twice: once, due to the trauma they experience themselves and again due to the inaction of the world concerning these atrocities.

I have heard many countries report their achievements today, and I congratulate them on those. However, since I started my speech here three minutes ago, more than 100 girls under the age of 18 have gotten married around the world. During the past hour, 50 young women have been newly infected with HIV and will have to struggle with the HIV stigma and discrimination. In a little over 8 hours, while representatives have been sitting here in this Hall today, 20,000 women have had unsafe abortions across the world, and 2,200 of them will die by the end of the day. How can we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action if this is still happening?

Change is coming. There is a strong movement of young people fighting for their rights. Let us take the opportunity of a new development agenda to include those essential rights. If we are serious about a new approach to sustainable development, the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people and findings of the ICPD beyond 2014 processes must be included in the post-2015 agenda. It is never enough to only listen to our voices. We need to be brave and to take action to improve the lives of half of the world's population.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Brazil on a point of order.

Mrs. Almeida Watanabe Patriota (Brazil): I would just like to ask for some clarification, because Member States and non-governmental organizations have been sitting here, without any further notice or explanation on what is going on. Some Member States were skipped, and others were chosen. So could you please clarify, Sir, where we are right now, because we have high-level representatives here, including from Member States, who have come from far away to deliver their statements.

The Acting President: We are now in the process of concluding our consideration of agenda item 7.

At this time, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to take note of the reports of the Secretary-General circulated in documents A/S-29/3 and A/S-29/4

and the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-seventh session, circulated in document A/S-29/5, and wishes to take note of the deliberations of the special session of the General Assembly on its findings and recommendations contained in that document?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 7.

Agenda item 3 (continued)

Credentials of representatives to the special session of the General Assembly

(b) Report of the Credentials Committee (A/S-29/6)

The Acting President: Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members that formal credentials in the form required by rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly have been submitted by the following Members after the meeting of the Credentials Committee on 19 September: Barbados, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of Korea, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Poland, Samoa, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, provisional credentials were received from the following Member States after the meeting of the Credentials Committee on 19 September: Afghanistan, Belize, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Haiti, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Maldives, Morocco, Nicaragua, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Switzerland, Tajikistan and Yemen.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 14 of its report (A/S-29/6). The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution S-29/1).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 3.

Statement by the Acting President

The Acting President: As we come to the end of this special session, I wish to congratulate all

participants on the quality of the debate and the sharing of national experiences over the course of this afternoon and evening.

This session has benefited from the invaluable contributions of Member States, many of which were represented by Heads of State or Government. Civil society organizations, particularly those representing the hopes and aspirations of young people, were also instrumental in our proceedings. The energy, enthusiasm and commitment shown by those organizations have been a driving force for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

We recall that at its forty-seventh session the Commission on Population and Development, taking into account the findings of the ICPD Beyond 2014 operational review and the regional review outcomes, adopted its resolution 2014/1, reaffirming commitment to further implementation of the ICPD agenda, which is clearly reflected in the Secretary-General's report before us.

During our deliberations throughout this session, we heard leaders affirm support for the Programme of Action while also reiterating many of their recommendations found in the framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD beyond 2014 (A/69/62). This has been a remarkable opportunity to commit in one voice to our collaborative intent to address the challenges to population and development in the twenty-first century.

From what we have heard, it is evident that the world has reached a turning point. Global progress is increasingly uneven and characterized by the exploitation of the Earth's resources, coupled with increased human consumption. That paradigm is a threat to inclusive development, the environment and our common future.

The session participants highlighted a vast range of formidable challenges facing our world, including unfulfilled gender equality and women's empowerment, the need for lifelong learning opportunities, and inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services, just to mention a few. We have to ensure that those issues are effectively addressed, in view of their significant implications for development policy. Similarly, we heard that increasing urbanization requires us to plan and build sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages. The impact

of population dynamics at the micro and macro levels also requires the integration of those elements into development planning at the national, regional and international level.

Respect for and promotion of human rights was emphasized by speakers as being critical to building individual capacity and resilience, both of which are essential for sustainable development. Many speakers stressed that further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, taking into account the representative regional reviews and the findings and recommendations of the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review, will be a critical first step.

Many also called for the findings and recommendations in the Secretary-General's report and the regional review outcomes to be included in the post-2015 development agenda. It is clear from the discussions that the development challenges we face require cooperation from all stakeholders, with strong emphasis on partnerships and global leadership from the United Nations. We must act quickly and decisively to put our plans into action on all the key development challenges at all levels in our countries. We have all worked hard up to this point, but in fact the real work starts now. We must proceed in that endeavour with a new determination, commitment and vision.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Acting President: We have now come to the end of the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As I understand it, when a point of order is raised the speaker should immediately be given the chance to speak. But since I have been given the floor now, I will make my statement, just as the representative of Brazil did.

It is unclear to us what is taking place right now. We have the impression, Sir, that you are about to close the special session, in spite of the fact that a significant

number of delegations have not had an opportunity to take the floor. Could you please explain that? Will those who entered their names into the list of speakers be given an opportunity to speak? Is it possible to close a session before all Member States that wish to take the floor have been given that opportunity?

The Acting President: In consideration of the sentiments expressed by the representative of the Russian Federation, Member States had agreed to extend the meeting until 9 p.m., and we brought it to that point because we felt it was necessary to get everyone heard. But it is not possible to continue beyond this point. Also, we must prepare for a meeting in the morning. That is the situation before us. This meeting was supposed to have concluded at 9 p.m. We take note of the Russian Federation's statement.

I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America on a point of order.

Ms. Pollack (United States of America): Like my colleague from the Russian Federation, I am just curious. For those of us who were not able to deliver our statements tonight, will we be able to submit them formally for the record of this session? I think that if we are not able to reconvene the session, that should be the absolute minimum for the approximately 30 to 35 Member States that have not been able to speak on this topic.

The Acting President: Member States are encouraged to put their statements on the website. They can also request that their statements be issued as documents of the United Nations.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): That was basically the same question I asked. I just want a clear explanation from the Acting President on why he is not giving the floor to approximately 30 delegations. He seems to be suggesting that those Member States that have not had time to speak today submit their statements in writing, and that they will be considered to have been delivered, as though the statements had actually been read out here. It is important for us to understand what is happening here and what the status is of the meeting we are attending now.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal on a point of order.

Mr. Sylla (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): In the wake of the comments made by the representatives of the Russian Federation and of the United States, we are truly surprised at the way in which our work is being conducted. The floor was given to bodies that are not at the same level as States to speak before the end of the event. We do not believe that this is an appropriate conduct of our work.

It is not enough to put on-line statements that have not been read out, even if they are entered into the verbatim records. The floor must be given to Member States so that they can speak. If we do not do so, we cannot ask States to send written statements; no one will read them and they will be of no interest even to other Member States. We are genuinely surprised.

We are not protesting the fact that representatives of civil society were able to take the floor; that is completely appropriate. But the way in which the speakers' list was interrupted and fully qualified representatives have been prevented from representing their countries does not seem to us to be the right

approach. We wanted to make a statement on that point for the verbatim record.

The Acting President: The statement made by the representative of Senegal is understood. However, it was unrealistic. The length of the list would mean that the meeting would go beyond the time we had allotted for it. We are now past the time when we should have concluded the meeting, and we have tried our best to incorporate as many as we could, trying to get every Member State on board. But speakers did not keep to the time limit; everyone ran beyond the time allotted. We ask for consideration. We have come to this point. If the countries in question submit their statements, they will be posted to the web site.

Closure of the twenty-ninth special session

The Acting President: I declare closed the twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.25 a.m. on Tuesday, 23 September.