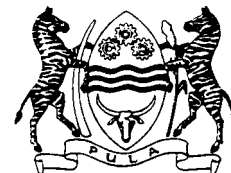


REPUBLIC OF
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Statement by

**Hon. Mr. Chapson J. Butale, MP
Minister of Health**

at the

**Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly
on the Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action
of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD + 5)**

New York, 2 July 1999

Mr. President,

The Government of Botswana attaches great importance to this Special Session of the General Assembly, which has brought our nations together to share a common forum to review and further implement the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

This Session is geared not only towards providing a comprehensive global review of population issues, but more importantly, to forge effective strategies for the next millennium. In doing so, we must mobilize the political will and the necessary resources and partnerships to tackle the critical and complex issues that continue to undermine the health, development and potential of our people.

Mr. President,

Since Cairo, Botswana has developed an explicit and comprehensive national population policy recognising the close interaction between population & development

To ensure effective implementation, a multi-sectoral plan has been put in place. The extent to which we can successfully implement this policy in a sustainable manner, will largely depend on the availability of resources.

To this end, Government has embarked on an economic diversification programme which should enable us to sustain our population and development strategies.

An enabling environment has also been created for the participation of the private sector and NGOs, to further strengthen their role as co-operating partners in development.

Mr. President,

Botswana has a youthful population with about 44% of the total population under 15 years of age. This, coupled with a high population growth rate, has the potential to propel the existing growth momentum, with consequences of varying magnitudes and complexity.

Today, we have in place an effective Family Planning Programme, which has led to a decline in the fertility rate. Further improvements are expected, as Government is now re-orienting and upgrading the Maternal and Child Health/Family Planning Programme, to a more integrated Reproductive Health Programme: which has an explicit component of adolescent reproductive health. We recognise that with enhanced participation of males in sexual and reproductive health activities, these programmes could be improved. Therefore, we are targeting males in order to promote their active participation.

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Mr. President,

There has been general improvement in mortality for the whole population, especially amongst infants and children. This is mainly due to significant investment in the health sector by Government.

However, mortality rates will rise due to the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; a situation that is likely to erode achievements made so far.

Botswana is one of the countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and young women and men are the most affected. These are the most able and economically productive citizens, in whom the future of our nation is invested. As a result of this, an increasing number of our children will be orphaned over time. The impact of this pandemic is undoubtedly, placing a heavy burden on individuals, families and indeed the entire economy. We also observe that while women and the girl child are especially vulnerable to HIV infection, there is also a disproportionate burden placed on them as care givers.

In response to this problem, the Government has put in place a number of intervention measures within the framework of a multi-sectoral National Policy on HIV/AIDS. These measures include the reduction of mother to child HIV transmission. HIV/AIDS, Mr. President is a threat to mankind and requires a global response: we therefore welcome the introduction of global targets on HIV as they will provide a yardstick to our national effort in this area. In this regard, the Office of the President is providing the political leadership for an expanded and more efficacious national response.

Government recognises the important role that women play in the development of our nation. In this regard, a Policy on Women in Development is being implemented to promote women's full participation and integration into the development process. However, there are still legislative and socio-cultural barriers, that we need to remove in order to realise the full empowerment of women.

Mr. President,

Issues relating to youth have been given prominence in the development programs of our country, and to this end, a National Youth Policy has been devised. It focuses on adolescent reproductive health, opportunities for employment creation, family life education, business training in the school curricula as well as provision of peer counselling by teenagers for those in and out of school.

Botswana takes pride in its achievements in the field of education. Notably, we have universal access to free education from primary to secondary school. Our challenge now is to further increase enrolment, improve quality and to re-orient the system to respond to the job market.

Mr. President,

As we enter the new millennium, unemployment and poverty remain the two most important challenges facing our country. It is against this background, that the Government of Botswana is actively pursuing strategies for sustainable employment creation and poverty reduction.

Government attaches great importance to effective partnerships with the private sector, civil society and NGOs. In recognition of these partnerships, we support these sectors, particularly, in priority areas identified by our national development plans.

Mr. President,

The Government of Botswana is fully committed to the Programme of Action, and we have within our limitations, mobilized resources for its further implementation. But, given the wide ranging and urgent development challenges facing our nation, there is tremendous stress on domestic resources. We, therefore, call upon our cooperating partners to provide required technical and additional financial resources to enable national capacity-building, necessary for taking Cairo forward. At this point, may I take this opportunity on behalf of the people of Botswana to thank our development assistance partners for their continued support.

Mr. President,

The reforms instituted by the U.N. Funds and Programmes has made these agencies well poised to effectively carry out their mandates. In this context, we pay tribute to UNFPA for its leadership in the area of population.

Mr. President,

We, strongly appeal to the donor community to increase financial support to the U.N. system to enable it realize its development objective.

It is our hope that for the good of our people, there will be concerted effort by us all in partnership, to realise the vision of this Special Session.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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