



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

delivered by

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Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations

on behalf of

The Nigerian delegation

to the

21st Special Session of the UN General Assembly
on the Review and Appraisal of Implementation of
of the Programme of Action of the International
Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+5)

New York July 1, 1999

Mr. President

We congratulate you on your meritorious election to the Presidency of this Special Session.

For Nigeria, the Cairo 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and indeed all other similar major global conferences have been of great significance. Most welcome and more important to my delegation now is the great opportunity which this Special Session provides us, as the United Nations family, to review and appraise implementation of the Programme of Action after 5 years of the ICPD.

Mr. President,

Before Cairo ICPD, the issues that have been 'prominent on the Nigerian population and development are many and wide-ranging.

Nigeria has a population of over 100 million, about 25% of **Africa's** population. More than 65% of the population is located in the rural areas, where access to health-care particularly from female staff is very limited. There has also been an unacceptably high maternal mortality rate (800 - 1,500 per 100,000 live births). With an annual growth rate of **2.8%**, the average fertility rate of 6 births per woman is among the highest in **Africa**. Child mortality has been estimated at 100 - 144 per 1,000 live births. Prevalence of modern contraceptive has been low. Illegal and unsafe abortion is common in adolescents and has a high associated mortality. Prevalence of HIV is unknown. It was reported to be 4.8 % in 1995. Currently, a sentinel surveillance is on-going to determine HIV sero-prevalance in Nigeria.

Mr. President

It is from this background and **within** the context of the only recently lifted international sanctions against Nigeria, that one can fairly review the progress made in Nigeria on the Programme of Action of the ICPD. Fully mindful of the **ICPD's** paradigm shift from focussing on demographic concerns to making the people's needs and rights as integral components of sustainable development, Nigeria followed up ICPD goals and principles with a number of implementing measures.

Of paramount importance among these is the reformulation of the Nigerian population policy, which is now in line with a rights-based, **people-centred** strategy. Other women-based policies ever since put in place deal with elimination of female genital mutilation, adolescent health, legal reforms to eliminate domestic violence and to raise age at marriage to 18 years; development of strategic **framework** for implementation of adolescent reproductive health. At present, integrated reproductive health care centres have been provided in ten of the 36 states in the country through UNFPA assistance.

Mr. President

Since ICPD, some institutional structures have also been emplaced to promote the principles and goals of Cairo. One of these is the establishment of a Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development at both national and regional levels throughout Nigeria. Of critical importance in the mandate of this Ministry or Department are the concerns for formulating policies and coordinating implementation of plans which address issues vital to women, that is, status of the woman and gender equality, equity, girl-child education and empowerment, feminisation of poverty.

Similarly, the Ministry of Health has been restructured by strengthening the Development of Community Development and Population Activities to coordinate population activities, thereby creating a division of Reproductive Health in the Department of Primary Health Care and disease control for implementing the integration of reproductive health care into the decentralized health system.

From the national level down to the grassroots, approval has been transmitted by the Federal Ministry of Education for comprehensive sexuality education to be introduced into school curriculum at all levels. Family planning commodities are similarly being procured for reproductive health and family planning.

The National Population **Commission** has also been active in compiling analytical data for enhancement of Nigeria's programme in furtherance of ICPD.

Mr. President

With a population of over 22 million young people, Nigeria has among its priorities the need to find the right and workable solution to the problem of unwanted pregnancy. Thus as a way forward, the Government is addressing the concerns of young people in Nigeria as vigorously as possible, using a multi-sectoral approach of health education, skilled development, **youth-friendly** reproductive and sexual health care. Like in any other nation, the children are our future and their welfare must be safeguarded.

Mr. President

In recognizing the needs and rights of the children, we will not subject parental guidance to the rights of the child. In this regard, adequate care will also be accorded to all ages of the Nigerian population, especially within the child-bearing brackets, to afford them informed choice for affordable family planning methods. Accordingly, public awareness and appropriate **counselling** is being made accessible to every Nigerian wherever they live and work with safe motherhood as a core component. National **AIDS/STD** policy and programme will be reviewed to make them more comprehensive, catering to the poor and elderly in our society.

Mr. President,

If we must see the trees as part of the forest then there is an undeniable linkage not only between population and development but also, and more importantly, between population and development and a number of other crucial issues such as external debt burden which severely hamper the sincere efforts of developing countries in finding the right financial resources to prosecute ICPD principles and objectives. The issues of ever dwindling ODA remittance from developed partners to buttress efforts of the developing countries also demands more urgent solution in the true spirit of partnership.

Finally, Mr President, with the **lifting** of economic sanctions against Nigeria and the recent enthronement of democratic civilian rule in Nigeria, we hereby restate our commitment to the principles and objectives of ICPD, trusting that our deliberations throughout these three days will result in a most

favourable, mutually enriching and value-added outcome for the benefit of mankind.

I thank you.