



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

by

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at the

69th United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the follow-up
to the Programme of Action of the International Conference
on Population and Development

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Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Let me join others in congratulating you and members of your bureau for the great effort in reviewing the summary report on the follow-up to the ICPD Beyond 2014. Pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 65/234, Sierra Leone participated fully in the review processes at all levels, taking cognizance of the progress to date and plans for the future with regards to the five key pillars, namely dignity, human rights, health, governance and accountability.

Mr. Chairman,

Sierra Leone remains fully committed in its national implementation of the recommendations contained in the five comprehensive pillars which are also aligned with our national development framework, the **Agenda for Prosperity**. Accordingly, we pledge our commitment to the roadmap for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.

Mr. Chairman,

Sierra Leone has made significant progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action but challenges abound. The country's 2013 Demographic and Health Survey suggests that some progress is being made towards the provision of basic health services for our people despite the dark shadow cast by the recent outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease for which we were certainly ill-prepared. Between 2008 and 2013, the total fertility rate dropped from 5.1 to 4.9 percent due to an increase in the use of modern family planning methods among married women which doubled from 7 percent to 16 percent. Antenatal care by skilled birth attendants increased from 87 percent to 97 percent; delivery by a skilled birth provider rose from 42 percent to 61 percent. Delivery at health facilities doubled from 25 percent to 56 percent. The rate of fully-immunized children increased from 40 percent to 68 percent. The use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) against malaria for under-five children doubled from 26 percent to 49 percent. These are positive results that we must celebrate as a country while redoubling our efforts to sustain them.

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to report that our womenfolk have not been left behind in some of our achievements. Recent review of progress in gender equality and women's empowerment reveal that there are at least 9.5 percent women with secondary education while 12.4 percent are represented in the national parliament and local council. The overall female participation in the labour market stands at 65.7 percent as compared to 68.9 percent for men. Deliberate policy actions are also being undertaken to ensure that women enjoy their rights, as exemplified by the enactment of the three National Gender Acts. We have also established a Parliamentary Committee on Human rights. Furthermore, we have also fully embarked on a constitutional review process where the voices of women and other disadvantaged groups are already coming out loud and clear.

Mr. Chairman,

It is also encouraging to report that Government has developed the National Action Plan on Security Council Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and 1820 on Sexual Violence. Significant progress has also been made in areas of disability, Children and youth and education

especially for the girl child and improved data collection and analysis for evidence-based decision-making, planning and development management. We however, recognize that a lot more needs to be done to increase women's representation and participation in all spheres of life.

Mr. Chairman, we do recognize the need to scale up our efforts in areas such as reducing maternal and childhood mortality which currently stand at 1,165 per 100,000 live births and 192 per 1,000 live births respectively. This is why we introduced in 2007, free healthcare services for pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of five. We however acknowledge that our national health system remains fragile with access to basic health continuing to pose challenges. Mr. Chairman, while we concentrated efforts in addressing issues of known health concerns in our region, our level of national preparedness and responsiveness to infectious diseases was seriously tested with the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease in May this year. We, however, appreciate that some very useful lessons have been learned that will further guide us in strengthening our national health system to prevent a recurrence of the current situation. At this juncture, let me applaud the support of our international partners in this critical time of need in our nation's history.

Mr. Chairman,

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

Mr. Chairman,

There is already national consensus to, first and foremost, focus on unfinished business in the areas of poverty eradication, elimination of inequalities and discrimination, including on the basis of sex; in education to ensure that it empowers the youth, especially girls; in health to improve access to essential services, while scaling up interventions to eradicate malaria, tuberculosis and HIV.

We remain fully conscious of the need to invest in creating opportunities and supportive environment for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for young people in order to make them productive, access jobs and realize their full potential.

Mr. Chairman

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

I thank you for your kind attention.