

As written

SPEECH

BY

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Mr. Chairman

Your Excellencies Leaders of Delegations

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. Chairman

My Government wishes to thank the Government and people of Netherlands, for providing excellent facilities for this Conference. On behalf of the Uganda Delegation, I also wish to acknowledge the warm hospitality we have enjoyed since our arrival in this beautiful city of The Hague.

My Government wishes to pay special tribute to Dr. Nafis Sadik, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Under-Secretary General of the United Nations for her untiring efforts in conducting the affairs of UNFPA and in arranging this important Forum.

This important Forum, the ICPD+5, convened mainly to assess progress and constraints since the ICPD in Cairo in 1994, comes at a time when our Governments and our people are indeed looking back to 1994 in order to assess what we have achieved since then.

Indeed, Uganda actively participated in the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and committed our committed ourselves to the Programme of Action and Recommendations of the ICPD. We pledged to  
mainstream the... ..

mainstream the adolescents and youth, to empower women and to emancipate the elderly and persons with disability. We pledged to address Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights.

We also pledged to involve civil society including the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in population and development activities including the planning, designing, implementing and monitoring of such activities. We also agreed that population programs should put the human being at the centre of their development activities and that Governments should provide an enabling environment so that individual men and women can play their rightful role in society and that only then can we attain sustainable development.

It is against this background that Uganda, soon after the ICPD, embarked on a series of post-ICPD activities. Using a participatory and inclusive process, the Government of Uganda initiated consultations with our partners including civil society, private sector and NGOs in order to establish the best way forward. By consensus, post-ICPD priorities for Uganda were identified and these priorities have since then guided our efforts and those of our development partners, including the civil society and NGOs in programming for the nation and our people.

Since then, Uganda intensified its fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic through a multisectoral approach and an open policy. H. E. The President of the Republic of Uganda went public over the issue of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and alerted the whole nation about the need to tackle the epidemic squarely. I am glad to say that our efforts have not been in vain. For the last 2 years, we have started witnessing a definite decline.....

definite decline in HIV/AIDS epidemic, at least in the urban areas, according to surveys carried out in various parts of Uganda. What this means is that although HIV/AIDS has no cure, well conceived, deliberate policies are effective and can work. Our open policy also help galvanize our development and partners in assisting us. At this juncture, let me also say that we in Uganda are willing to share our humble experience in this and many other fields with those nations that may be interested.

Like other developing countries, Uganda has a sizable young population. Since the ICPD, Uganda has paid more attention to adolescents and youth. We have embarked on programmes like PEARL (Programme to Enhance Adolescent Reproductive Life) in order to address the hitherto neglected needs of the young people. I am glad to report that we are starting to see the benefits of these programmes.

Since 1956 when the NRM came into power, the Uganda Government identified women as a group that had been marginalized and which needed to be mainstreamed and empowered. In order to empower woman Uganda took advantage of the recommendations of not only the ICPD but also of the Women's Conference which took place in Beijing in 1995. Prior to 1994, the Government of Uganda had put in place a process of politically emancipating women through creating special elective seats exclusively for women, starting right from village to national level. I am glad to report that Uganda has the highest number of elected Women Members of Parliament in Africa. Affirmative action for women was also further enhanced through positive discrimination for girls entering University education and we shall continue to ensure education for the Girl-Child.

As regards harmful.....

As regards harmful traditional practices that impinge on Reproductive Health and Rights of women, we have tackled the problem of female genital mutilation (FGM) through a cultural sensitive approach using the REACH (Reproductive, Educative and Community Health) project. I am glad to report that within a period of 2 years, we have witnessed a 36 per cent decline in this harmful practice in the District of Kapchorwa. In recognition of this major achievement, the people of Kapchorwa were awarded the prestigious 1998 United Nations Population Award. We are looking forward to registering even more success in the near future so that we completely eliminate this harmful practice. On December 3, 1998, H.E The President of the Republic of Uganda made a major pronouncement suggesting that the people of Kapchorwa should abandon this culture. Like in the case of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we think we shall soon benefit from this pronouncement.

Considering that Uganda still has one of the highest maternal mortality rates, we have, through RESCUER (Rural Extended Services and Care for Ultimate Emergency Relief) Project, reestablished a referral system to take care of obstetric emergencies. We hope that through this programme, we should be able to reduce the current unacceptably high maternal mortality in the country. Uganda used to enjoy an effective referral system which unfortunately collapsed with the civil strife that Uganda has had to undergo.

In the field of Advocacy and Development Strategies and in order to enhance advocacy activities, Uganda has enlisted the collaboration of Members of Parliament through the Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development and Food Security. Members of Parliament are now acquainted with population issues

and are outspoken.....

and are outspoken advocates of Reproductive Health and other population related issues. We have been also able to reach out to both the religious and cultural leaders. In Uganda, religious leaders of the Catholic, Protestant and Islam faith, just like the Kings of the various Kingdoms in the country, have also lent a strong hand to our programmes. This has ensured the involvement of communities in programmes that target them.

At the Regional level, the 3 East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have established the East African Reproductive Health Network, which brings the 3 countries together to share experiences within the region. We have intentions of expanding this to our immediate neighbours in the region as well.

At the international level, Uganda has been admitted to the South-to-South Partners in Population and Development which has its headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The goal of the South-to-South collaboration is to share experiences and learn from each other in a cost effective and sustainable way.

Although Uganda has registered the above modest achievements in the field of population, Uganda's social indices remain poor by any standards. Maternal mortality rate remains high at 506 per 100,000 while infant mortality rate reduced from 122 in 1988 to 97 per 1,000 in 1995. Contraceptive prevalence has risen from 5% in 1988 to 15 per cent in 1995 while total fertility rate reduced from 7.3 children per woman in 1988 to 6.8 children in 1995. Poverty reduced from 55% in 1992 to 46% in 1996 and life expectancy is low at a mere 48 years.

The Government of.....

The Government of Uganda regards the population programme as a high priority and we have done our best to allocate considerable resources to the sector. Our emphasis from now on is going to be on making sure our people understand the relationship between poverty, family size and their welfare. We want Ugandans to adopt the concept of a ‘Manageable family size” so that we can get out of poverty. The people, individual men and women, families and communities must rise up to the challenge and participate actively in the uplifting their own welfare. This is our challenge in Uganda today.

On behalf of the Government and people of Uganda I would like to put on record our appreciation of the efforts of our development partners and donors who have stood by us to assist us in our programmes. It is obvious, however, that despite all these good intentions and efforts, we still need more assistance from our development partners to supplement our own efforts if we are to improve the quality of life of our people.

I thank you.