



DÉCLARATION

STATEMENT

BY HIS EXCELLENCY
M. BASILE IKOUÉBÉ,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

TO THE 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.

New York, 22 September 2014

Check against delivery

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Delegates,

First of all, I would like to commend the arrangement 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 consider such an evaluation very timely, at this point when we are committing to the creation of a better future for the world after 2015 and the Africa that we want by 2063, now that it is fifty years since our independence.

The value of today's meeting clearly lies in the opportunity to give a collective response to a highly topical issue, that of the rapid growth in world population.

According to a **UNICEF** report published on Tuesday 12 August, in the future 40% of the world's children aged under five will live on the African continent, where the population is expected to double in the space of 35 years, accounting for 40% of world population by the end of the century.

We need to look further into these overall findings and pay special attention to Africa.

The challenge we face is how to assure demographic transition by making this rapid growth not a risk, but an opportunity to be seized.

African countries assessed the situation while assembled in Addis Ababa on 26 July 2013, within the framework of the review process for the ICPD beyond 2014.

The African Common Position, which we 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 it will inform current discussions on shaping the ICPD Programme beyond 2014, and will contribute to the Post-2015 Development Agenda for the African continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The population and development debate, as well as current discussions on the future world development agenda, gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our unreserved support for the ICPD Programme of Action, with the aim of achieving our national development priorities.

With little more than 4 million inhabitants in a territory covering an area of 342,000 Km², the Republic of Congo could be considered under-populated.

However, its annual population growth rate of nearly 3% (2.7%) is considered too high.

The country is going through a phase of very high population growth, as shown by the quadrupling of its population.

This growth rate has implications for development policies, where one of the major challenges, as for most developing countries experiencing a population boom, is how to manage the population growth in relation to poverty, population flows and inter-generational balance.

Thanks to having reached the completion point of the World Bank's HIPC initiative, and with steadily increasing oil revenue in recent years, the country has considerable assets to help it respond to the main development challenges it faces.

I will make specific mention here of the empowerment of women and young people and gender equality, where we have undertaken to maximize the benefits of the demographic dividend by investing in creating opportunities and fostering an environment of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, giving young people the opportunity to create jobs and fully realize their potential.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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 us all.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that the successful implementation of the world development agenda depends not only on our collective commitment, but also to a large extent on the existence of strong partnerships.

This session gives us the opportunity to pursue further, and more effective, implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.

As some demographers say, "there is no purely demographic solution to development problems" but also, "there is no development without taking demographic factors into account".

Neither Afro-pessimism nor Afro-optimism does justice to Africa today; it is time to "make way for Afro-realism and to think clearly about our continent".

Thank you.