



*Check Against Delivery*

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE  
REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

**AT THE**

**SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE  
FOLLOW-UP TO THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT**

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President of the General Assembly,  
Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All other protocols respectfully observed.

It is indeed an honour and great pleasure for me and my delegation to be given this opportunity to share with the distinguished delegates the experience of The Gambia in the implementation of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action.

In this respect, the Gambia reaffirms its commitments to the Principles, charters and protocols that advance the agenda of population and development particularly the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights and enhancing the decision-making powers of women and youth at all levels.

In this regard, the government of the Gambia continues to strongly believe in the principles of universal access to reproductive health and services including HIV/Aids, and that women be given the right to decide freely the timing and number of children they wish to have. We have indeed recognized that universal access to reproductive health and services including HIV/AIDS are a prerequisite for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

In addition, The Gambia in its various development policies and programmes upholds the right of adolescents and youth to access information and services related to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and has

taken steps to integrate women, adolescence and youths RH issues in the Health and National Population Policies and the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment.

Under the dynamic leadership of His Excellency, The President, the Government of the Gambia continues to demonstrate high political will in providing health services to all Gambians at affordable prices and most importantly the provision of free maternal and child health services in public health facilities. Similarly, the First Lady's "Safe the Baby Initiative" have instilled renewed efforts and attention towards addressing maternal and newborn health. Immunization coverage is near universal in the country. Furthermore, malaria prevention and management during pregnancy an integral element of reproductive health services in the Gambia is a source of envy in the sub-region. The same is true for access to health service delivery points as over 85% of the population is within 5 kilometres of a primary health care post.

Notable among the key achievements since 1994, are: the impressive improvement in girls education and women empowerment, development, and government support to national population and housing censuses and surveys (demographic and health survey, MICS etc) and reduction in poverty levels.

Women in the Gambia actively take part in all human endeavours from homes, farms to managing the affairs of the state machinery as they have had greater access to productive resources and institutional support services.

In an attempt to play our quota in promoting south-south collaboration, the Gambia has shared technology, skills and best practices in the area

reproductive health, population and development with other PPD member countries.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Government has invested significantly over the years in human, materials and financial resources in addressing population, health and development issues which have yielded positive results. For example, TFR has declined from 6.01% to 5.6% from 1993 to 2013; maternal mortality ratio has declined from 1050 to 730 and 433 per 100000 live births between 1990, and 2013 respectively; the under-five and infant mortality rates have declined from 135 to 54 and from 99 to 34 per 1000 live births respectively between 1990 and 2013.

**Mr. Chairman**

While counting successes in implementing the ICPD programme of action, we continue to face a number of challenges which include resources inadequacies and the youthfulness of the population.

The Gambia still remains one of the most densely populated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (a population density estimated at 127 persons per square kilometres). It is worth noting that the high population density if unchecked may pose challenges both in terms of environmental sustainability and agricultural production. There is also a high unmet need for Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC) services (79%).

**Mr Chairman**

To effectively plan and manage development, we need population data. The availability of the data and information to policy makers, civil society, academia, social networks and individuals can help us bridge the

implementation gap, enhance our capacity to monitor policies and improve transparency and accountability.

**Mr. Chairman**

It is worth noting that unless the international community and governments fulfil their funding commitments towards addressing population and development issues the developing countries in particular will find it difficult to tackle challenges posed by our populations especially the youthful generation.

Despite all the challenges outlined above, the Government of the Gambia is still committed to managing the population resource in order to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development and ultimately improve the quality of life of all Gambians.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.