



## **94-09-05: Statement of Kenya, H.E. Prof. George Saitoti**

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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICE-PRESIDENT AND MINISTER FOR PLANNING  
 AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, PROF, GEORGE SALTOTI,  
 AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT HELD IN  
 CAIRO, EGYPT SEPTEMBER 5TH - 13TH, 1994

Mr.Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

The Secretary General of this Conference, Dr, Nafis Sadik, Distinguished  
 Delagates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On Behalf of my delegation and my own Behalf, allow me .to convey  
 to you, Mr., Chairman, and through you to this conference, the greetings

and best wishes of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya  
I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General of  
the Conference, Dr, Nafis Sadik, and the entire Secretariat, for the  
able manner they have managed the Conference preparations, in the same  
vein, I would like to express my profound gratitude and that of my  
delegation to the Government and the friendly people of the Arab  
Republic of Egypt, for the warm welcome and wonderful hospitality  
accorded to us, since our arrival in this historic and beautiful city of  
Cairo,

Mr. Chairman,

The holding of this Conference in Egypt is not only an honour to  
this great country and African continent as a whole, but also, the venue  
serves appropriately to focus the attention of the world on the enormous  
developmental problems afflicting Africa, and the developing countries  
in general, This meeting is being held at a time when most African  
countries including my country Kenya, are going through various economic  
hardships of great magnitudes, Some of these developmental problems such  
as deteriorating terms of trade, the balance of payments and domestic  
fiscal crises which have been occasioned by these events, have forced  
many countries into heavy borrowing, sometimes followed by failure to  
service external debts, as well as undertaking onerous but most  
necessary, structural adjustment programmes, The short term costs of  
these efforts have been high and the timing of the long term benefits  
sometimes uncertain, as attested to by the recent reports of  
institutions as varied in philosophical perspective as world bank and  
Oxfam.

Additional development problems include the shortage of investment

and development capital, unemployment, poverty and environmental degradation, Not all of these problems necessarily emanate from the increased numbers of our populations, although they may be marginally correlated, and therefore their solutions may lie elsewhere, It is my hope that this Conference will provide us with not only measures of how to manage our populations beneficially, but ways of meaningfully developing and transforming our economies, without eroding the ethical and moral fiber of our societies.

Mr. Chairman,

The world population is estimated at 5,6 billion, most of these people live in developing nations. Given the large base, the annual population increments will continue to be high and are likely to remain so, for some time in the future.

However, these international trends should not be a reason for us to feel pessimistic and discouraged as to the future of our world. While some of the figures may be discouraging especially for Africa, significant accomplishments have been recorded in the areas of lowering birth and death rates, improving the general levels of education and incomes, including the education and status of women, and more importantly, positive changes have occurred in attitudes greater demand for family planning information and services at the grass-roots level, All these accomplishments must have contributed positively towards slowing down the global population growth rate. However, this should not give us a reason to be lax but should provide us with the enthusiasm to work harder towards achieving better results in the future, especially in areas that registered discouraging results, Mr, Chairman, permit me, before I turn to other matters before us, to give a short brief on how my country has performed since the last Conference in 1984,

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Had I been standing here before this assembly some fifteen years ago, I would have been talking about a country with the highest rate of population growth in the world now instead, I can talk of a country well in demographic transition, In 1979, Kenya's population growth rate was estimated at 3,9 per cent, The total fertility rate was 7,9, It was 5,4 by ,1993, But even this conceals the full dynamic change, In 1979, total fertility rates in rural and urban locations were 8.1 and 6.6 respectively. These had, by 1993, decreased to 5.8 and 3.4. Such dramatic changes in such a short period, truly signal demographic transition. The rate of population growth is now still quite high at 3,1 per cent but, with the changes that underlie these fertility rates, our target of 2.5 Per cent by the year 2000 is highly likely,

Various factors account for the success in our population programmes in the 1980's among them the family planning information and services linked to education and the general improvement in the women status, enabling women to participate in all aspects of development. Combined with this has been the use of modern family planning methods, Contraceptive use has risen from 7 per cent in 1978 to 33 per cent in 1993. Although levels of use only rose moderately over the last four years, from 27 to 33 Per cent. in 1993 although level of use only rose moderately over the last four years, from 27 to 33 per cent, there has been a radical shift in the use of more effective modern contraceptive methods, these accounted for about two thirds of all family planning in 1989 while at present they account for 84 per cent,

Mr. Chairman,

The use of modern contraceptives is strongly associated with higher levels of education, 15 per cent of married women with no formal education use a modern method, compared to 29 per cent of those with at least some secondary education. These data provide important evidence that Kenya's dual investment in girls' education and service delivery, are having a strong positive influence on fertility decline. The change in behaviour that underpins the above statistics arises from two major thrusts in Kenya government social policy. On the one hand, the improvement in the status of women through improved access to education while, on the other, improvements in health. At the time of independence in 1963, two-thirds of the less than 1 per cent had some secondary education, By 1993 less than 5 per cent had no education and over 20 per cent had some secondary education, This continuation of schooling has reduced early marriages. Again, at the time of independence, 45 per cent of girls in the 15 to 19 year olds bracket were married, Now less than 14 per cent are, A similar dramatic picture can be seen in the 20 to 24 year olds where 87 per cent has been reduced to 54 per cent over the same time-frame. These changes in the age at marriage which are closely associated with increase years at school, have given rise to spectacular decreases in age specific fertility rates, In the 15 years since 1977, the fertility rate of the 15 to 19 year olds has declined by almost 35 per cent while that for 20 to 24 year olds has fallen by about 25 per cent.

Mr.Chairman,

Besides the impact of education which I have just described, the improved survival rate of infants due to overall improvement in the health services have contributed to major changes in fertility

behaviour. Of course, the survival rate is itself correlated to education. At independence, more than 120 out of every 1000 babies failed to see their first birthday and 200 did not reach their fifth birthday. Today, 62 out of every 1000 babies fail to see their first birthday while 95 do not reach their fifth birthday. The fact of infant survival in the African culture where breast feeding is most common, has clearly given rise to a longer spacing between pregnancies, while the expectation of child survival has significantly affected desired family size.

At the helm of the success of the Kena's family planning programme is the political commitment of the Government, and the untiring crusade which His Excellency the President, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi has spearheaded, Over the years, President Moi has taken every opportunity to impress upon Kenyans the need to have families they can adequately provide for, It is clear that the Kenyan people have responded to this call ,Kenyans are also grateful for the support we have received from the international community in the provision of family planning services.

Mr. Chairman

Regarding Implementation of our population programmes, our strategy has been decentralization through the utilization of local and community organizational structures At the same time, the Government has, over the years, made efforts to put in place the management, co-ordination and organizational structures for population activities in both the public and private sectors especially the NGOs Government support for NGOs through institutional capacity building has enabled them to perform their work better and more efficiently, But throughout

this support, there remains a serious concern that the gains of political and economic independence, are not jeopardized by cultural imports hostile to the values lie espoused in showing off colonial imperialism,

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like now to turn to matters of population and development that are ahead of us. One of the most important factors in the future economic and social development of Africa and of the developing countries in general, is the rate of population growth. However, bringing down the rate of population growth is not a sufficient condition, not indeed a necessary one, for development to occur in the less developed countries, unless other obstacles to development are simultaneously addressed. The scope of mobilization of population and development calls for a strengthened partnership between men and women and should go beyond family planning. In the past, women's role in development has been underplayed, leading sometimes to denial of their basic rights. This Conference therefore should not limit the development focus to only the reduction of the growth of numbers in the developing countries, since this will cause population programmes to fail to address the aspects of how to improve the rights and status of women, which we have found to be the first step towards a successful reduction in fertility. In our country, women should not be viewed as a target of development policy through which population reduction by a quick and efficient "technological fix", could be achieved.

Mr, Chairman,

The preparatory Conference documents lay considerable stress on

the impact of population growth on ecology as well as sustainable development, Much of the world's literature in this matter highlights the adverse implications of population growth on urbanization with allied increases in pollution, industrialization associated with development has also been identified as a cause of undermining the environment, similarly, there is a popular view that population growth in the rural areas has contributed to environmental degradation and desertification, while it is true that rapid population growth has sometimes affected environment and sustainable development negatively, there are certain characteristics in Kenya which are noteworthy in these respects, Our country is one of the least urbanized in the world, In fact, our policy documents have sought to increase urbanisation, while learning from experience of the rest of the world that Such urbanization needs to be widely dispersed to be beneficial through economies of scale and, trivially, it is obvious that cities are wealthier per square kilometer than farms. Even the so called "bright lights syndrome" that underlies much urban drift and quest for white collar education, suggests that real earnings per urban worker are perceived to be higher.

Similarly, a close look at the population distribution in developing countries and particularly in Kenya reveals that the rural districts with the lightest population densities, happens to have higher per capita incomes, This correlates closely with the distribution of infrastructure and the access to markets. Even changes in technology in these areas have been environmentally friendly and more sustainably productive. Ironically, the sparsely populated areas which happens to be the marginal lands are the ones experiencing desertification. These areas definitely require a different type of development policy, perhaps irrigation, than the densely populated ones. Internationally, observe that migrations from the developing world, which are important factors



in population dynamics, are usually to cities where there is more congestion and very high population densities. This tells us that people are not looking for more space as a top priority, but rather, better economic opportunities which could guarantee them a better standard of living.

Mr. Chairman,

Kenya recognizes the economic and environmental benefits that accrue from long term low population growth rates. However, we feel that such low population growth rates should be sustainable through improved women's health and education which are important factors for improving acceptance of contraceptive methods. In countries where primary medical services are poor and illiteracy high, achievement of low long term population growth rates would only be possible where uninformed choices are made, death rates are high or down right coercive practices employed. Kenya does not support coercive population policies and believes in population programmes that respect peoples' rights, That is why I would like to disagree with the simplistic argument that fertility control would solve the "problems" of poverty and environmental degradation caused by "population growth". The concern of this view is only the achievement of population targets, and this has the risk of application of physical, economic or intellectual coercion, In fact, such coercive policies which are often very subtle would do little to improve the quality of life for the poor and women in both the developed and less developed countries.

Kenya's population programs will therefore continue to respect individual rights, religious beliefs, and cultural values. The Government will however continue to educate the population on the advantages of small families, while at the same time, improving women's status and rights including, access to and control of economic and

natural resources, health, and education The Government also recognizes the importance of a stable family (in the traditional sense) in the success of the development and any allied population programmes.

Kenya believes that inordinate liberalism is not in conformity with our cultural and religious values. However, this should not be construed to mean that we are against technology and modernization. It is only that we are convinced that a stable nation, and a stable world has to be built by stable families, since these are the basic units in a nation. We firmly believe that those morals, traditions cultural values and religious beliefs that in the past have ensured stable Kenyan families, should continue to be respected and observed.

We, therefore, do not subscribe to the idea that the youth should be exposed to a contraceptive mentality, Kenya believes in the dignity of human life Although we teach a number of topics related to the biological processes in schools, these must always be complemented with the utmost respect for the family's ability to inculcate its own religious and cultural values, It is only in this way that we consider that independent decisions by individuals can truly be an exercise of their dignity,

Mr. Chairman,

There is much sense in a family having few children that it can look after each one properly in terms of food, health, education and potential employment, but I also realise that the world is full of examples showing that the future is truly unpredictable. Scholars since Malthus have tirelessly predicted multifarious disaster and mankind's ingenuity has equally tirelessly circumvented it. In closing, let me

note that the world has experienced a lot of changes since the last meeting in Mexico, The world has moved beyond the dualism where it was divided into neat boundaries between East and West and other similar divisions.

The multiple explanations of the relationships between population, environment and development should not therefore divide us into debates of North verses South, women verses men, traditional versus modern and environmental protection verses economic growth, to name only a few, Instead, we should work towards finding workable solutions to the developmental problems that afflict the world to the mutual benefit of mankind, For, after all, the care of the common good of all a nation's citizen is the true responsibility of each Government, Kenya strongly supports the partnership, at an international level between all those truly seeking for the betterment of mankind.

Mr. Chairman,

I look forward to constructive deliberations which will enable us devise workable mechanisms that will make the world, in the 21st century and beyond, a better place to live in.

Thank You.

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