

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Country Statement on Progress with the Implementation of the Programme  
of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development**

**Presented by**

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**to**

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The president

Distinguished Delegates

As most delegates would be aware, South Africa successfully entered a new democratic political dispensation in 1994. This same period also marked the normalisation of our international relations and full participation in activities of the United Nations. This included our active participation in the proceedings of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 and ratification of the Programme of Action.

At the time of the ICPD, national indicators on the profile of South Africa's population as a whole were effectively non-existent. In 1996, we had the very first truly national census. The initial findings of the census reveal that the total population now stands at 40.5 million and is composed of 77 percent Africans, 9 per cent Coloureds, 3 per cent Asian and 11 per cent Whites.

The classification of South Africa as a middle income country masks its starkly contrasting living conditions. One in every six people are classified as poor and 95 per cent of them are African. Poverty is rural based and is concentrated among female-headed households. 73 per cent of the poor live in rural areas. In addition to annual income earnings of female-headed households amounting to about half that of male-headed households, the racial background puts African female-headed households at the bottom of the income category. The unemployment level was estimated at 38 per cent in 1997, with the highest incidence among Africans, youth, women and rural dwellers.

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<sup>1</sup> The exact figure is **40 583 573**.

The population growth rate of 2.06 percent, the 2.7 per cent rate of labour force growth and the underperforming economy all call for collaborative integrated action to create jobs and tackle poverty in an equitable manner. Between 1980 and 1995 the total fertility rate dropped from 4.2 to 3.2. Fifteen per cent of births occur to teenagers. The rate of fertility decline is fastest among the Africans. The unacceptably high levels of African infant and maternal mortality rates (40 per 1 000 and 250 per 100 000, respectively) demand special efforts. The fast rising HIV/AIDS epidemic is set to adversely alter the demographic, economic and social scenario of the country. The infection rate, at 1 600 per day, is among the highest in the world with women, the poor, youth and young adults being most at risk. An average of 16 per cent of women attending antenatal clinics are infected, 30 per cent of children in paediatric care in tertiary institutions have HIV/AIDS and it is the third commonest contributor to maternal deaths nationally.

A transition to the new political and socio-economic era demanded a complete overhaul and transformation of the system of governance. The last four to five years in South Africa have entailed the most comprehensive transformation of the service delivery system; creation of a conducive environment for sustainable development; and, alignment of government activities to the new human rights based political approach, national priorities, international conventions as well as the challenges posed by globalisation, including economic competency.

The underlying principles of South Africa's overall population policy approach include economic expansion, equity, access to basic services for all citizens and entrenchment of basic human rights. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is the overarching framework of the new government's policy approach which aims at achieving sustainable human development and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy is the macroeconomic policy instrument that enables sustained economic growth, labour absorbing wealth creation and budget restructuring towards

social spending. The Bill of Rights of our Constitution enshrines the entitlement of every South African to equitable human dignity and rights which explicitly include satisfaction of basic needs as well as the freedoms stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All other **sectoral** policies derive from these three components of the national development framework.

The Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been very instrumental in facilitating and supporting policy making and legislative reform. They are also actively involved in the implementation of these policies, particularly at the grassroots level.

Honourable Chairperson

The recommendations of the Programme of Action of the ICPD (ICPD-PA) offered us an opportunity to completely rethink our approach to population issues and to place them centrally within the context of the nation's development and human rights agenda. The formulation of the new South African Population Policy is one of our major achievements in the implementation of the ICPD-PA. The Policy is based on a set of twelve guiding principles which provide the ethical context for a human rights approach to integrating population concerns into development planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The goal of our Policy states that changes in the determinants of the country's population trends must be brought about in such a way that these changes are consistent with the achievement of sustainable and people-centred human development. The responsibility for the integrated implementation of this Policy rests upon all sectors, with the National and Provincial Population Units are being re-established to provide professional facilitation and support.

South Africa has generated a wide range of phenomenally progressive and comprehensive policies and legislation that are necessary for effective implementation of the strategies designed to tackle the population and development concerns outlined in the Population

Policy. Policy formulation and legislative reform cuts across the environmental, social and economic sectors. In addition to **sectoral** concerns, particular attention is given to poverty alleviation, gender mainstreaming, basic human rights, equity and the plight of vulnerable groups such as the aged, youth, the disabled and rural communities. The most far reaching policies include the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996 aimed at the prevention of unwanted pregnancy. The White Paper on Land Policy of 1997 is partly aimed at reducing inequity in the share of productive resources as well as the National Water Policy of 1997, the White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997, the 1996 National Plan of Action for Children, the South African Schools Act of 1996, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and the Rural and Urban Development Frameworks.

The government recognises, and has committed itself to soliciting and facilitating, the vital contributions of the non-governmental sector. The pinnacle of this commitment is through its enactment of the Not-for-Profit Organisation Act (1997) which represents a fundamental shift from government control and **intervention**. It enables the strengthening of NGOs and builds a cooperative relationship between government and the sector.

Institutional arrangements for overseeing and supporting the-implementation of policies and legislative instruments have also been put in place. Notable among these are: the Human Rights, Gender Equity and National Youth Commissions; an Inter-Ministerial Committee on HIV/AIDS; a Cabinet Ministers' Committee on Poverty Alleviation; and, located in the Office of the Deputy President, are the Office of Disabled Persons, the Office of the Status of Women, as well as the Coordination and Implementation Unit.

We have made some achievements towards practical integration of population and development **concerns**. Under the auspices of the RDP, Presidential Lead Projects, initiated in 1994, were designed and implemented in response to life situations in which lack of access to basic needs has been most crippling. Some notable achievements in this

regard are as follows:

- through the Land and Tenure Reform and Restitution Programmes, over 24 000 people had recovered their land by 1997; in addition, 68 000 households had benefited from 340 small-scale farming projects linked to land redistribution ;
- the Housing Programme which enhances access to affordable housing and related services has up to date availed 936 754 housing subsidies and 629 449 housing units to disadvantaged communities across the country;
- the Electrification Programme exceeded the target of 450 000 annual connections since 1996:
- the Primary School Nutrition Programme had reached 14 000 schools, with 4.9 million learners, by 1997;
- three million South Africans who were previously under served now benefit from the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Project ; and
- pregnant and lactating mothers and children under the age of six now have access to free basic health care services.

In order to directly reduce poverty and inequality, social spending has been raised up to 60 per cent of the national budget. A Poverty Relief Fund has been set up by government totalling R800 million for the 1998/99 financial year to assist critical social service and infrastructure **delivery** departments such as Welfare, Water Affairs and Forestry, Health and Public Works. The Flagship and the Working for Water Programmes, initiated by the departments of Welfare and Water and Forestry, respectively, demonstrate a significant shift in government's approach to sustainability, gender mainstreaming, targeting of poverty pockets and vulnerable groups and integrated strategies. The former aims at equipping the poorest of welfare dependent, unemployed women with children under the age of five, through skills training and income generation. The Working for Water Programme addresses environmental, economic, population and social development aspects within a single integrated framework in rural settings. It seeks to

enhance water security through control of alien vegetation, while creating jobs and **skills**, providing reproductive and basic health care, HIV/AIDS education and food security.

Chairperson

Job creation to reduce unemployment especially among the youth is a great challenge to South African government and peoples. The October 1998 Presidential Jobs Summit demonstrated collaborative initiative between government, **labour**, private sector and civil society. The summit reached consensus on anti-poverty initiatives, boosting the demand for local products and services, control of imports, job security, skills development, small business development and special programmes targeting women and youth. Strategies for resource mobilisation in this regard are being developed and government has already made financial commitments.

We have made some significant achievements in reaching the reproductive health needs of youth and women. These include a wide spectrum of life skills programmes for youth and adolescents with respect to adolescent health, sexuality, teenage motherhood, HIV/AIDS and health promotion. This is the one area in which the NGO sector has contributed prominently. Since the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1997, 45 000 women have accessed the service which includes **counselling** before and after termination.

Chairperson

While the **first** five years of both the ICPD-PA and our new democracy have been marked with policy formulation and institutional transformation and restructuring, the next five years must see these policies being progressively implemented. The reality of the situation, however, is that the new Population Policy and other sustainable human development policies cannot be effectively implemented without accurate population data

and information. Secondly, adequate integration of Population Policy concerns into sectoral plans and strategies requires building of capacity to relate sectoral concerns to population (and environmental) issues. Thirdly, major challenges to the delivery system include inefficient utilisation of limited resources, change management, inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Furthermore, we have recognised that major hurdles which concern every South African pertain to poverty and inequality, unemployment, the under-served urban periphery and rural communities, wide spread vulnerability, violence against women and children, maternal mortality, premature births and the impact of migration patterns on access to services.

Looking ahead, South Africa will continue to mobilise technical and financial resources, to strengthen coordination mechanisms and monitoring systems, to consolidate and harmonise the national information system(s), to build capacity for implementing the ICPD-PA and the Population Policy. Specific focal areas will include poverty alleviation; the needs of women, the disabled, youth, children (especially the girl child) and the elderly; inculcation of male responsibility in gender nodal points, women's health and family livelihood; alignment of production and consumption patterns to environmental sustainability; and mainstreaming of reproductive health and rights into activities of the social, economic and environmental sectors. All these should be realisable within the context a dynamic intergovernmental and extra-governmental partnerships.

President

**Allow** me to thank you and the UNFPA for this opportunity to address the Forum. Furthermore, I wish to urge the world community to strengthen its commitment to the ICPD-PA and to create space for countries to exchange ideas, experiences and best practices in order to facilitate further implementation of the recommendations of the programme of Action.