

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MS. B.O. DLAMINI , REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE 29TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION (POA) OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (ICPD)

NEW YORK, 22 SEPTEMBER 2014

Mr President,

This Special Session of the UN General Assembly, which is reviewing progress in the implementation of Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), is significant for South Africa. This is because it coincides with our own 20 years of life without the discrimination and oppression of apartheid. As we celebrate our new and emerging democracy, we are reminded that our struggle against policies and laws that sought to exclude and marginalise people based on race, class, sex, gender, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation is one that forms part of the ongoing agenda of the ICPD.

The South African Population Policy, in accordance with the South African Constitution and guided by the ICPD Programme of Action, emphasizes the attainment of sustainable development and places people at the centre of that development. Ensuring that people enjoy access to fundamental human rights cannot be separated from the ideals of attaining equitable and sustainable development if we are to improve the lives of people.

South Africa acknowledges the progress and huge strides made over the past 20 years since our governments met in Cairo to adopt the ICPD Programme of Action.

We note, however, that much remains to be done despite our efforts, especially on the African Continent. We have not yet realised our commitment to provide comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all and to provide the opportunities that we as States have committed to.

The recent 20-year review of the ICPD Programme of Action clearly pointed out the huge gaps as well as the uneven and fragmented progress, that remain in terms of ensuring comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all women and girls.

It is critical during this Special Session to take note of our implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action during the past 20 years. It is necessary to highlight that further actions are required to achieve the goals we set for ourselves, including through the upcoming inter-governmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr President,

South Africa therefore welcomes the thorough review and preparations undertaken by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). We support the findings and recommendations of the operational review contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/69/62) - "Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014".

South Africa further reaffirms its support for the regional review outcome - the *Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014*. The *Addis Ababa Declaration* is Africa's Consensus Position on the review of the ICPD Programme of Action, adopted by African Ministers responsible for Population in October 2013 and endorsed by African Heads of State and Government during the African Union Summit in January 2014.

Consistent with the Addis Ababa Declaration, we as South Africa have commenced with the following programmes:

- Improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls through improving access to safe abortion services and modern means of contraception. Earlier this year, we launched a comprehensive contraception and family planning programme. Through these programmes we will continue to integrate Sexual and Reproductive Health Services, HIV and family planning services;
- We also started a school health programme that will provide comprehensive health services for young people and adolescents;

- Our Department of Health is improving programmes to eliminate preventable maternal mortality through the provision of comprehensive maternity care;
- Providing Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. South Africa has experienced an unparalleled increase in life expectancy since 2005 thanks to the world's biggest programme of HIV and Aids drug treatment. This rise in life expectancy – from 54 years in 2005 to 60 in 2011 – was of the order usually only seen after a major societal shift, such as the abolition of slavery;
- Maximising the benefits of our demographic dividend through our National Development Plan, such as improving the implementation of the national social protection floor. Our child support grant has proven to reduce poverty and inequality as well as resulting in reduced risky sexual behaviour by adolescents. We further intend to universalise the child support grant and the State Old Age Pension to support all sections of our inactive population.
- In order to keep to the Addis Ababa's Declaration's promise of eliminating all forms of discrimination and gender based violence, we are developing better policies and programmes to protect women and children. Our Department of Justice is setting up a hate crimes unit to deal specifically with discrimination and violence targeting people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

Given its significance, South Africa calls for the regional review outcomes, such as the Addis Ababa Declaration, to be taken into account in the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014, and to be integrated into the inter-governmental negotiations process on the post-2015 development agenda.

We view this Special Session as an important occasion to reaffirm the relevance of the ICPD Programme of Action and to continue to engage on what we have achieved, and more importantly what we still have to achieve. This includes saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and girls who die unnecessarily giving birth, or of the complications of unsafe abortions.

Other notable gaps and areas that need special attention include the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality at national and international levels, which are aggravated by gender inequalities, lack of empowerment of women and girls, gender-based violence and the continued inequalities within and between countries and regions.

Mr President,

As South Africa we remain committed to continue to cooperate with fellow Member States to celebrate the successes we have achieved thus far, and more importantly to achieve the further measures needed to realise the objectives we set ourselves at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994.