

22 September 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Special Session of the GA on Follow-Up to the
Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population
and Development Beyond 2014**

**Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Twenty years ago, at the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, our Governments affirmed that population is not about numbers; it's about people. They reached consensus on a Programme of Action to transform the quality of life for all, to expand human choices, and to achieve economic growth and sustainable development.

Today, we recall and reaffirm the historic goals and objectives of the 1994 Cairo Conference to better prepare for the future we want. A future where people can realize their aspirations, where their human rights are respected, their well-being and dignity are supported and our environment is protected for this generation and for generations to come.

This Special Session marks the culmination of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD and its follow-up beyond 2014. The results of the ICPD Beyond 2014 review show that our countries have made considerable progress in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action during the past two decades.

It is impossible to speak of this progress without acknowledging the leadership provided by governments, and the contribution of civil society, including religious communities, youth groups, women's organizations and many others.

We must also recognize the decisions of parents to educate their children, especially girls about the full and effective enjoyment of all their human rights, and to foster an environment of equality between their sons and daughters so that they can reach their highest potential and live in dignity free from violence and discrimination. So in recognition of the progress made, lives transformed and saved, we can celebrate our collective efforts.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Population Fund for its important support of national efforts to implement the Cairo agenda.

But the journey that began with national surveys and included regional ministerial conferences and a global intergovernmental meeting in April of this year does not end today.

The remarkable progress the world has seen since the historic United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s and the 2000 Millennium Summit, still falls short of our ambitions and needs. A lot more must be done to improve the quality of life of all our peoples.

It is therefore essential to address, with urgency, the findings of the ICPD Beyond 2014 review, which show that despite significant gains in poverty reduction and economic growth since the International Conference on Population and Development, many people have been left behind – their basic needs unmet, their human rights unfulfilled and their potential unrealized.

Poverty, discrimination, as well as income and wealth inequality threaten economic growth, the well-being of individuals, societies, and our planet, and are relevant to the discussions at tomorrow's Climate Summit and the general debate that follows. These common challenges should be addressed in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Excellencies,

The ICPD review report concludes that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity, across sectors and throughout the life-course, is the foundation of sustainable development.

The review's findings have significant implications for development policy. We urgently have to address rising wealth and income inequalities; unfulfilled gender equality and empowerment of women; gender-based violence and discrimination; the need for lifelong learning and investments in building young people's capabilities; inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services and strengthening health systems.

Similarly, increasingly diverse household structures and living arrangements require us to plan and build sustainable cities and strengthen urban-rural linkages.

The impact of population dynamics is so important that we need to better integrate it into development planning at national, regional and international levels.

The development challenges before us require a coordinated, systematic response, through greater cooperation, partnership and global leadership that I intend to promote further as President of this General Assembly.

We must build on lessons learned and maintain the momentum. Together with the Millennium Development Goals, the ICPD agenda helps pave the way for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the achievement of sustainable development.

This special session provides the international community with a crucial and timely opportunity to share ideas and reinforce its commitment to improving the lives of people, fostering equity and dignity, and ensuring sustained, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, let us commit ourselves to stronger action, guided by the ICPD beyond 2014 review, to fully implement the Cairo agenda on population and development. I look forward to your statements sharing your governments' visions for implementing the ICPD beyond 2014.

Thank you for your attention.