

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD +15) Ministerial Conference

Statement by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA

23 October 2009, Addis Ababa

Your Excellency Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, State Minister of Finance and Planning of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
Mr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission,
Ms. Mari Simonen, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to welcome you all to Addis Ababa and to this very important Ministerial Meeting of the Regional Review Conference on the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

The Dakar/Ngor Declaration, which formed the basis for Africa's contribution to the ICPD Programme of Action, and the Programme of Action itself, are key contributions that helped to establish a firm basis for the close inter-relationship between population and development. It is therefore important that we track progress that has been made thus far in the implementation of their provisions and recommendations while also determining what needs to be done in the remaining five years of the 20-year Programme of Action.

It is noteworthy that in spite of grappling with some of the most contentious issues on the global agenda, the Cairo Conference was able to achieve a consensus. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the fact that the ICPD Programme of Action underscored the fact that population issues are about people and not just their numbers. It accordingly placed the rights and concerns of people at the heart of population and development issues and established the link between population and a broad range of rights such as the right to development, health and education.

Equally significant was the recognition of the rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons as well as the right to sexual and reproductive health. The right to decide freely on the number and spacing of children was also reaffirmed as a fundamental right of individuals and parents. The Cairo Programme of Action is also closely linked to the Millennium Development Goals, the goals to reduce maternal mortality and provide universal access to reproductive health

Noticeable progress has been made in Africa to implement the ICPD Programme of Action. The survey undertaken in preparation of this Review Conference showed that a lot has been done by African countries to formulate national policies and legal frameworks to enable the achievement of the Programme of Action and the MDGs.

Similar progress is being made at the regional level. A notable example in this regard is the 6th African Development Forum which took place here in Addis Ababa last year and adopted an Action Plan committed to promoting gender equality and ending violence against women. Such signs of progress are particularly noteworthy because of the understandable differences in cultural values across countries and societies.

It is also equally significant that progress has been made with regard to specific issues such as improved child survival rates, greater focus on maternal health and improved access to treatment for scourges such as HIV and malaria. This forward movement has been enabled in part by the establishment or strengthening of institutions and agencies charged with addressing various aspects of population development and designing programmes for required implementation.

Formidable challenges still remain to be addressed in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action. Some of these relate to the coverage and rate of implementation, resources, gathering of data and global challenges and crisis. Some countries are yet to pay attention to implementing the provisions of the ICPD Programme of Action, while some of those who have adopted the necessary policy frameworks are lagging behind in implementation. The issue of resources is also critical in the sense that commitments need to be matched by improved funding for population and reproductive health activities. It is a shame that with the present scale of global resources and all the advances of modern medicine, African women continue to die while giving birth.

There is need to improve the gathering and analysis of population data to ensure the adoption of properly targeted policies

and programmes in our countries. Several countries have not held censuses in a long and in many instances the institutions and procedures for collecting and analyzing population related data are weak and or non-existent. All our countries are tackling the effects of the finance, food and fuel crisis and of climate change so it is important to have a clear picture of how these challenges are impacting on vulnerable groups, including women and children who often bear the brunt of these crises.

If we are to achieve the goals and objectives of the Cairo Programme of Action then there is need for concerted action by all concerned to be fully engaged in mobilizing the resources and building coherent partnerships. On its part, ECA has been working with key partners such as the African Union Commission, the United Nations Population Fund and civil society organizations to support member States efforts in this key area. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to salute our partners and urge for even greater commitment and dedication on all sides to ensure the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

I also salute the dedication and commitment of Ministers whose presence here underscore the importance that they attach to this meeting. I am sure that your deliberations will be fruitful and that your recommendations will go a long way in accelerating Africa's rate of progress in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action.

I wish you successful deliberations. Thank you for your kind attention.