

Remarks

By Hon Eriya Kategaya

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Presented at the 3rd Eastern African Reproductive Health Network
(EARN) Coordination Meeting

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Imperial Royale Hotel
Kampala, Uganda.

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda, let me welcome all of you distinguished participants to our country Uganda. I have been informed that currently Uganda is the Chair of the Eastern Africa Reproductive Health Network (EARHN); and that is why this important regional meeting with a theme of “Repositioning Family Planning” in the Eastern Africa Region; is being hosted here.

I am greatly honored to be officiating at this important meeting today from the Government of Uganda’s side because of recent we have been at the centre of high level dialogue for repositioning Family Planning by hosting the International Family Planning Conference in November 2009.

We are also glad to have been given the honour to host the 15th AU Summit just a month ago whose theme was “Maternal, Infant and Child Health & Development”. Again here the African Government showed further commitment at the highest policy levels.

It is evident that maternal and child morbidity and mortality still remains unacceptably high especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa; and that one of the reasons for this is the unavailability and inaccessibility of Reproductive Health Services and commodities. There are some slight improvements however. For example in Uganda maternal mortality declined from 503 to 435 per 100,000 live births between 2001 and 2006. This trend should be encouraged especially since there is also evidence that in Uganda one in every ten women in union would like access modern family planning methods to either space or stop child birth.

As you are all aware, there are slight differences in these indicators in our Eastern Africa Region. This is likely to change within the next few years with the intensification of the African Union (AU) Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMA), an

initiative of the Department of Social Affairs with the African Union Commission (AUC). Uganda has already launched its own version - Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Uganda (CARMU) in June this year with the involvement of the First Lady of Republic of Uganda as the Champion of this campaign. This shows the seriousness that the Government of Uganda is attaching to the problem of continued unacceptable high maternal and child morbidity and mortality. I also know that the other countries on the continent are doing the same launches.

Repositioning family planning remains a major challenge for us in the community, yet it is one major way out of poverty as well as to better lives. I am pretty sure you will have a lot to share and learn amongst yourselves today. To me, this coming together as a unified block is an excellent strategy for integration in order to achieve social and economic development.

Uganda is widely acclaimed as a success story for its phenomenal reduction of the HIV/AIDS incidence and prevalence rates; and we don't

see why we should not be able to upscale family planning service provision while at the same time we bring down maternal and infant mortality and morbidity.

The Government of Uganda also aligns itself with the Cairo 1994 international Conference on Population & Development Program of Action (ICPD-PoA) which shifted emphasis from population numbers to population quality. We should all be aware that population issues are very important to the individual country's development, because they form the basis for planning. From the population field, we firmly believe that, health, the availability of family planning and other reproductive health services; quality education and employment are essential to alleviation of poverty in our member countries.

We therefore embrace all the efforts being put in place under the South to South Partners in Population and Development; which is itself a product of the Cairo 1994 ICPD-PoA. The value and importance of south-south cooperation in sharing among developing countries the experiences gained and lessons learned in family planning and population programmes cannot

be over-emphasized. There is a great deal of expertise available in many countries that need it. Government of Uganda has so far gone ahead and signed an agreement to host the South to South Partners in Population and Development – Africa Regional Office; as yet another indication of our support to the initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen allow me to extend, on behalf of the Uganda Government my heartfelt congratulations to the South to South Partners in Population and Development together with the Population Secretariat on convening this meeting.

I do hope for stronger partnership to push the agenda for improving population, Reproductive and development situation in Africa. I want to challenge the technocrats present here to draw lessons from Asian countries that were at same rating and levels, not many years ago, but have surpassed developed countries, in terms of population, Reproductive Health and development.

The Government of Uganda is further fully committed to the South-South cooperation and we pledge to be open and closely work with the Partners in Population and Development.

It now my pleasure to officially declare this meeting open

I thank you