

SPEECH

**By Abdelylah Lakssir
International Programme Officer**

On behalf of

**Dr. Jotham Musinguzi
Regional Director, Partners in Population and Development Africa
Regional Office (PPD ARO)**

AT

**THE OPENING OF THE THIRD EASTERN AFRICA
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NETWORK (EARHN) COORDINATION
MEETING**

**“Repositioning Family Planning and Reproductive Health in the
Eastern Africa Region”**

Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

September 2, 2010

Our Chief Guest – Hon. Eriya Kategaya, Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for East African Community Affairs,

The Ag. Director, POPSEC

Honourable Members of Parliament from the Eastern Africa Region present

Distinguished participants from EARHN Member Countries

Representatives of Development Partners

Distinguished participants from Uganda NGO's

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Regional Director of Partners in Population and Development Africa Regional Office – Dr. Jotham Musinguzi who has not been able to be with us today because of other equally important commitments, I wish to start by extending a very warm welcome to you all, to this Third Eastern Africa Reproductive Health Network (EARHN) coordination meeting.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers of this meeting for inviting me and honouring me with the duty to give some remarks at the opening of this important meeting. Indeed, I feel greatly honoured.

Secondly, I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of PPD Africa Regional Office and on my own behalf, to welcome you to our country and your second home, Uganda. I wish to thank all of you for being able to spare your precious time and come to participate in this important meeting. Thank you once again.

As you are aware, it was during the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo that countries of the South came up with the idea of South-South cooperation in the field of Reproductive Health, Population and Development. The Eastern Africa Reproductive Health

Network (EARHN) was initially established as a south- south partners' initiative of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to enhance collaboration in addressing population and development issues among the three countries. EARHN has now encompassed other countries to include Burundi, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

As you are all aware, Uganda is host to the PPD Africa Regional office which was opened in February 2007 in order to help re-invigorate south-south collaboration within Africa. The PPD Africa office was established to ensure an improved sexual and reproductive health environment and better coordination of south-south collaboration activities and programs in Africa. The Vision of PPD Africa is “a continent that meets its Reproductive Health needs, promotes the Population and Development agenda and thereby addresses poverty, through South-South Cooperation”. Its Mission is “to provide a platform for the promotion of and resource mobilization for Reproductive Health and Population and Development in Africa through three key mission elements: policy dialogue, networking and building strategic partnerships in the region and sharing of experiences and good practices”.

PPD therefore strongly associates and supports initiatives of EARHN because they are in tandem with one of our core strategic thrust of networking and building strategic partnerships in the region. Indeed one of our core activities is to undertake activities that re-invigorate sub-regional and regional reproductive health networks within the regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. This is in addition to working and developing strategic partnerships with NGOs and CSOs as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies.

PPD believes that networking and formation of strategic partnerships will broaden the resource base (financial and human) for addressing Sexual and

Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) as well as help diversify the experiences and pool expertise for sexual and reproductive health, population and development issues. In this regard, PPD is very supportive of EARHN. We have already started replicating our experience with EARHN to other regional economic communities in Africa. As part of PPD ARO's programme to promote SRHR, Population and Development in the Africa region, PPD ARO, in collaboration with National Population Council (NPC) of Ghana supported in August last year the development of the Strategic Plan for the West Africa Reproductive Health Network (WARHN) to guide its work in promoting SRHR, Population and Development in the region. We are also working towards the re-invigoration of the RH network crafted around the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

I am aware that, in addition to sharing country experiences regarding the implementation of the EARHN Strategic Plan, this meeting is being organized under a very important and timely theme, which is "Repositioning family planning and Reproductive health in the Eastern Africa Region". We, at PPD ARO believe that increasing investment in family planning and reproductive health is very important for the social development of our region. Why is family planning important? Simply because it helps among others; having healthy women and children, breaking the cycle of poverty among families, ensuring women's full contribution to the economy and therefore accelerating the achievement of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I am also aware that participants to this meeting are technical people from different Ministries as well as Champions in the area of FP/RH from several organizations in the Eastern Africa Region. We are glad to have such a group

meeting under the auspice of the EARHN. We believe that combining the work of technical personnel and local FP/RH Champions in a joint effort, will for sure help in meeting the targets of the EARHN Strategic Plan as well as strengthening the voices in demanding for the revitalization of the FP/RH agenda in the region. We are convinced, that by using your expertise, your professional contacts, your skill and stature, you will positively impact the process of bridging the gap between policy and practice, and be effective players in advocating for the prioritization of family planning at national, regional and global levels.

I am hopeful that this meeting will provide an opportunity for us all to have a critical look at our own strengths and opportunities as well as areas where we can learn from each other in our future advocacy work, networking and sharing of experiences. I am also hopeful that this meeting will further help to lay and cement a strong foundation for long lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborating arrangements among countries and regional networks in addressing FP/RH, population and development, which we have already embarked on.

On behalf of PPD Africa Regional Office, I would like to assure you that we very much appreciate the valuable time you have taken off your busy schedules and to travel all the way, to be here with us in Kampala for this meeting. I wish you a very productive and fruitful meeting.

I thank you.