

SPEECH

BY

DR JOTHAM MUSINGUZI

DIRECTOR GENERAL NATIONAL POPULATION COUNCIL, UGANDA

AT THE OPENING OF THE

MEETING OF NETWORK OF AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES  
OF HEALTH (NEAPACOH)

ON

OCTOBER 30, 2018

AT

SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO

Hon. Dr. Michael Bukenya, the Session Chairperson,  
The Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, Rt. Hon Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga,  
The Executive Director, PPD, Mr. Adnene Ben Haj Aissa,  
The Chairperson, NEAPACOH, Hon. Ruth Labode,  
The Executive Director, African Institute for Development Policy, Dr. Eliya Zulu  
The UNFPA Country Representative, Uganda  
Distinguished Hon. Members of Parliament  
Representatives of Development Partners  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me yet again, to be here this morning, to speak to you at the opening of this regional meeting of Parliamentary Committees of Health in Africa-NEAPACOH. First of all, let me take this opportunity to thank the organizers of this meeting for inviting me and congratulate them for organizing such an important meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome to Uganda our brothers and sisters who have come all the way from the different countries across Africa to attend this meeting.

I would like also to thank the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, Rt. Hon Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, for finding time out of your busy schedule to be with us this morning. Your presence is a great honor to us and is indeed a testimony of your commitment to our endeavor. I know you have this network at heart, and you've always given this forum your utmost consideration. Thank you.

I also want to thank members of NEAPACOH together with other stakeholders – UNFPA, AFIDEP, EAHPRO, IPPF-ARO, who have continuously provided support in one way or the other in the organization of this important meeting. To the staff of PPD ARO, congratulations upon spearheading this event with such fervor and enthusiasm that it deserves.

There is no doubt that you honorable members of parliament, hold special positions in society, and it is as such that we believe that you can steer the quality of health of the people of Africa. Every time you speak in Parliament, we feel our voice is being made more audible. Your voice is the voice of your constituencies, and is our voice and whenever we hear you, we always feel of dropping a note to you to remind you of our preoccupations and concerns. We do have trust in our representatives and we are convinced that our views and concerns would be heard, understood and taken care of seriously if they come from you. That is why we believe and are keenly devoted to working with parliamentarians as change agents and central players to the full implementation of international and regional agreements on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our countries have very good and clear policy frameworks but the overriding problem on our continent remains a lack of political will and commitment to support the implementation of these otherwise good policies.

We, therefore, see a lot of hope in parliamentarians as vanguards to improve the implementation of policies and programmes, as well as resource allocations for reproductive health including family planning. Through legislating on good policies for health, appropriating funds for health programs and projects, and exercising your oversight roles in the implementation of health related policies and programs, we

know you can make positive impact in the policy environment for improving the reproductive health situation at country, regional and continental levels.

I am aware that NEAPACOH meetings are held annually and PPD ARO organized one at this very hotel last year, where a Kampala call to action was developed and adopted with countries coming up with their own country specific commitments. This year's meeting provides a platform for sharing progress made, challenges and lessons learned on achieving the RH/FP country commitments as well as enhancing the capacity of these stewards to implement the RH/FP frameworks in the region. As a Director General for Uganda's National Population Council, I am very honoured to interact with you yet again, and I am looking forward to hearing the progress from all the countries that were represented last year.

This year's meeting has been organized with the theme **“Building the capacity of African policy makers for improved reproductive health and family planning outcomes in the region: Challenges and Opportunities”**. This provides an opportunity to you honourable parliamentarians to learn from the commendable facilitators of this meeting, and from each other as well.

We need to pay attention to the overview of the reproductive health and family planning, population and development challenges in Africa. Poor SRH is linked to poor maternal & child health outcomes and eventually curtails socio-economic development. That is why it is important to satisfy women's or couples' reproductive health needs, if we're to harness the demographic dividend in Africa. Let us take the harnessing of the demographic dividend very seriously.

On behalf on National Population Council for Uganda, I am therefore very pleased to associate myself with this meeting. We look forward to collaborating with PPD ARO and other likeminded partners to providing an endearing space for visibility and implementation of the recommendations of this meeting.

Let me use this opportunity to wish you all fruitful deliberations throughout these two days.

Thank you.