

STATEMENT

BY

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SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

AT THE OPENING OF THE

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

ON

30-31 OCTOBER 2018

AT

SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO

The Chairperson, NEAPACOH, Hon. Dr Ruth Labode from the Parliament of Zimbabwe,

Hon. Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development Government of Uganda,

Distinguished colleagues Hon. Members of Parliament both from Uganda and outside Uganda,

The Executive Director, Partners in Population and Development (PPD),

UNFPA Uganda Country Representative,

The Director General, National Population Council,

Representative of IPPF Africa Regional Office

Representative of the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP),

Representative of the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC)

Representatives of Development Partners,

Parliamentary Clerks for the Committees of Health of the different Countries here present,

Members of Civil Society Organizations,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am happy to welcome you all to this beautiful country, Uganda. My special welcome goes to those of you who are visiting for the first time. For those who have been to Uganda before, you are welcome again. I hope that the organizers have made provision for you to have time off your meeting, to visit the rest of Kampala beyond this massive resort hotel lying on the shores of Lake Victoria.

I am delighted to have been invited, to preside this morning, over the official opening of this meeting of the Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health. I was touched by the program content and the theme for this meeting: **“Building the capacity of African policy makers for improved reproductive health and family planning outcomes in the region: Challenges and Opportunities”**. This could not have been more timely, happening at a time when we need real capacity building for our policy makers so that they play their rightful roles of leadership and stewardship for reproductive health and family planning programmes in our countries. I therefore thank PPD and NEAPACOH leadership the meeting organizers to have thought of this theme. Capacity building is a real challenge that cuts across other health service delivery mechanisms on this continent.

Let this meeting provide that space for constructive discussions among yourselves Honourable participants on behalf of the people you represent from your respective countries and constituencies. I

trust that you will situate your deliberations on priority policy interventions, with the view of building and sustaining momentum for political will to act on Reproductive Health issues within the context of the SDGs.

It is imperative that strong political will, national ownership and support is built and maintained in order to consolidate the gains made, complete the unfinished Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) business and sustain momentum for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Fellow Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen

We are not short of policy environment to facilitate our work in bringing higher up to scale issues of reproductive health including family planning, population and development. We still have frameworks like Maputo Plan of Action, which is a forward looking policy framework for Africa whose main objective is universal access to Reproductive Health services. The Abuja Declaration which called on African countries to devote at least 15% of national budgets to health is still as valid as it were. We know the commitments under the ICPD and many of you were recently in Ghana to review the Addis Ababa Declaration for Population and Development (AADPD+5), five year later. We have the Accra Agenda for Action which aims to ensure national ownership, alignment, harmonization and accountability for aid effectiveness.

At the Family Planning Summit that was held in London in 2012 and another one last year in July, countries made family planning commitments to be achieved by the year 2020. We now have the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by countries at the UN in September 2015.

I was here last year and added my voice to the Parliament of Uganda commitment for **the enactment of the national health insurance bill**. I am sure that my colleagues will report on the progress made.

I also know that you are going to make commitments on behalf of your parliaments. It should be our work as parliamentarians to play our oversight functions and ensure that our governments fulfill the commitments they make. All these frameworks are about delivering a better Africa, a better world for the benefit of the people we serve. Unfortunately, implementation of these good policies remains a big challenge for most of our countries. Make good use of the time here to interact and share best practices for the good of the people we represent.

Parliamentarians are key players who can through your roles remove legal and administrative barriers to access quality health services; you can influence resource allocation and ensure clear budget lines and expenditures on health; and you can ensure that funds from both the national budgets and donors are spent efficiently. The answers to addressing health issues including sexual and reproductive health

problems that confront us are therefore not far-fetched and are within our reach.

Distinguished participants

Evidence from research shows us that there are four (4) pillars to reduce maternal mortality: 1) antenatal care 2) emergency obstetric care; 3) skilled attendance at birth; and 4) family planning. These are pertinent issues and the objectives of the meeting address them well.

You are going to share innovative and cost effective parliamentary experiences and practices that enhance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), FP2020 and SRH related commitments. Do not forget your responsibilities of enhancing accountability, political leadership and stewardship for the implementation of these frameworks in the region in the context of the SDGs.

That's why I am happy that you will discuss topics anchored on ensuring greater accountability and oversight of the implementation of global, regional and national development strategies in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I have no doubt that members of parliament will benefit from expositions by the experts present here as well as from the experiences and best practices coming from the different countries that will be shared in the next two days.

It is my hope that you all have a pleasant stay here at Speke Resort Munyonyo, which is a few minutes' drive from the City Centre of Kampala. I hope you will also have time to visit some other parts of our country to appreciate the beauty of Uganda, the Pearl of Africa.

It is now my pleasure to declare this conference officially open and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

For God and My Country
