



Speech by Mr. Alain Sibenaler
UNFPA Representative
At NEAPACOH meeting to be held on Oct 30 - 31, 2018 in
Kampala, Uganda

Honorable Speaker of Parliament; Rebecca Kadaga

Ministers;

Executive Director, Partners in Population and Development; Mr
Ben Adnene;

Members of Parliament from Northern and Eastern Africa;

Development Partners,

The Director General, National Population Council,

Civil Society;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All Protocol Observed.

It is with great honor for me to speak with you on behalf of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at this very important meeting of the Network of African Parliamentary Committees on Health (NEAPACOH).

I would like to start by thanking PPDARO for consistently organising this annual event that brings together members of Parliament from Eastern and Northern Africa. To us this meeting of members of the Parliamentary Health Committee is important because it is a platform where parliamentarians share experiences, learn from each other and clarify on commitments to be followed up in the subsequent year in regard to SRH/FP, GBV Population and Development concerns. This enables Parliamentarians to be accountable to the people.

This year UNFPA marked 50 years when the world proclaimed family planning as a basic human right at the first International Conference on Human Rights under the theme “Family Planning is a Human Right”. In addition, this month UNFPA launched the State of the World Population Report with the theme “The Power of Choice”. We all agree that Choice can change the world and rapidly improve the well being of women and girls, transform families and societies

and accelerate global development. This can only happen when couples or individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. This enables the couples/individual to exercise their rights and other basic human rights. Therefore sexual reproductive rights, are tied to many other rights, including the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence and other rights to adequate health, education, and jobs.

When people lack choice, especially the young girls, it can have a long-term impact on the desire to fulfill their potential through education, good health and participation in the labour market. This also drives gender inequalities and iniquities which are still common in most of Africa.

The recent ICPD @25 review, Africa reviewed the Addis Ababa Declaration on Harnessing the demographic dividend under the six pillars of Dignity and Equity; Health; Place and Mobility; Governance; Data and Statistics and Partnership and International Cooperation. A lot of progress has been realized to-date but there are still major inequality gaps that make categories of the

population vulnerable and therefore limiting their access to services including family planning information and services. We can only change a woman or girls' world if she has access to affordable and acceptable SRH services. This therefore means Zero unmet need for family planning, Zero preventable maternal death and Zero GBV.

In Uganda today, there is a conducive SRH policy environment (although with a few misunderstandings about sexuality education especially among religious leaders, but this is being addressed), however, implementation has been pointed out as the major challenge. As Members of Parliament you have been instrumental in advocating for domestic budget allocation for family planning/SRH, Prevention of teenage pregnancy and FGM, advocacy for better maternal child health; and a lot of progress has been registered especially the case for Uganda. Now more than ever before, Uganda (and other subSaharan African countries) need your oversight responsibility to hold the gatekeepers accountable to deliver an integrated package of rights that ensures rights and choices for everyone. By so doing, we shall have ensured a wide choice for women and couples in relation to opportunities including a choice of contraceptive use through a method mix at all levels; reduce FP discontinuation (currently estimated at 45% in Uganda); reduce

teenage pregnancy which is high in almost all sub-Saharan African countries; address gender imbalances and regional inequalities that still keep majority of the populations especially in the rural areas vulnerable/marginalized. We must ensure that indeed no one is left behind.

Hon. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for your leadership on population issues in the country and leading on efforts to ensure that we leave no one behind as we work together to strengthen service delivery in Uganda. I reiterate your message to the Hon. Minister for Planning in Uganda that you made during the launch of the State of the Uganda and World Population reports last Thursday, that he should consult you so that as Parliament you plan together and come up with sustainable ways of addressing the population challenges the country is facing. This was reassuring of the role of Parliament and we commend you for this.

Honorable Speaker and Members of Parliament, I pledge UNFPA's commitment to continue supporting the Government of Uganda and all partners as we explore, innovate and implement an effective integrated package of rights to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Let us give hope to the young generation to Live their Dream.

Wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank You.