



中华人民共和国国家卫生健康委员会
National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China



Ministerial Session

Promoting South-South Cooperation for Attaining Nairobi Commitments and the Agenda 2030

By Dr. Isatou Touray, Board Member of PPD, and Honorable Vice President, Government of the Gambia (7 minutes)

Tuesday, 8 December 2020, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. GMT

Gambian Time 11:00AM

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening, wherever you are.

First, I would like to welcome you all here today in this virtual meeting. We are here joining with zoom link because a global pandemic COVID-19 seems to reach a new and tragic milestone that we never found within last 100 years.

Every loss of life is a tragedy. It's also motivation to double down and do everything we can to stop transmission and save lives. We also need to celebrate our successes that few pharmaceutical companies come up with COVID-19 vaccines.

We have gathered through zoom is to discuss a very important topic, being the responsible for **Promoting South-South Cooperation for Attaining Nairobi Commitments and the Agenda 2030**. Why I find this topic of the utmost importance. I will explain in a short while.

First, we know the solidarity of middle-income countries with other developing countries with a view to supporting their development efforts, including in the context of South-South and triangular cooperation.

Second, we noticed that many developing countries continue to face serious development challenges and that many of them are not on track to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the SDGs and ICPD 25.

Third, the COVID-19 crisis impacted the global economy, destroyed partially the health systems in many of not only developing countries but also developed countries.

It is therefore partnerships, solidarity and South-South collaboration are essential to make such critical challenges. We are here to discuss about these issues and find out solutions for our future to ensure wellbeing of all.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to congratulate in particular H.E. Ms. Lindiwe Zulu, MP, Honourable Minister for Social Development, Government South Africa for being elected Board Chair of PPD. She would our leadership for promoting South-South cooperation during and post COVID-19 crisis.

I also express a warm welcome to my distinguished colleagues, the Ministers of Health and their delegates from the PPD member and other countries.

Today, we will hear about experiences from many countries from our members, regarding practical steps to promote SSC for achieving Nairobi Commitments. I hope that we all, including myself, can learn from each other today, during the session. Each of us, naturally, take into account the differences between our countries. South-South cooperation, as an important element of international cooperation for development, offers viable opportunities for developing countries in their individual and collective pursuit of sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

We welcome efforts by multilateral, regional and bilateral financial and development institutions to increase financial resources to promote South-South cooperation, where appropriate, including for the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition.

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As you all are aware about that Gambia is a small West African Country with an estimated population of 2.3 million. The country has one of the highest population densities of 215 per square kilometer and among the poorest countries in the world, with nearly half (48.6%) of its population living below the absolute poverty line of US\$1.25 per day. The Gambian population is young with over 40 per cent of the population below the age of 15 years. The country has a young population with an overall median age of 18.2 years.

Due to its high fertility and declining child mortality, The Gambia's population increased rapidly from about half a million in 1973 to about 1.9 million in 2013. Current estimates indicate 2.2 million. Fertility is still high in Gambia, and the decline has stalled. Various estimates of the TFR are shown: 5.9 (GBoS, 2016), 4.4 (DHS, 2019) and 5.5 Population Reference Bureau (PRB, 2017). These estimates are similar to the Western Africa average of 5.3 children per woman in 2016 (PRB, 2017). The national censuses and the DHS 2013 indicates a national decline of over 80 per cent in under-5 mortality in about five decades i.e. from 341 per 1,000 live births in 1961 to the most recent level of 63 per 1,000 live births in 2010.

The current Government recognizes that sustainable economic and social development of the country requires full participation of women, men, girls and boys. Women and girls continue to be disadvantaged due to socio-cultural norms and practices, as well as by discriminatory provisions in customary law.

They are also, subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/excision (FGM), forced and early marriages that mostly go unreported; occupy only 10.3 percent of the parliamentary seats, are not represented among chiefs, constitute only 5.9% of elected councilors, and 21% of cabinet Ministers; and have lower literacy levels.

The Population Commission Secretariat and its Partners in Government particularly the (RMNCAH) unit of the Ministry of Health NGOs, Civic Society Organizations continue to find innovative approaches of ensuring increased access and utilization of sexual and reproductive Health information and Services with integrated approaches to increase access and utilization of these services to women, girls and youths in disadvantage communities.

The Gambia revised the national population Policy in 1996 with a view to integrating the recommendations of the ICPD. Despite the formulation and implementation of Population and other Policies such as the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, Family Planning Policy, Education Policy and many, The Gambia registered significant successes in the implementation of these policies but also faced challenges.

In Gambia, The National Population Commission Secretariat is the technical arm of the National Population Commission which was established in 1992 following the formulation of the first explicit Population Policy for The Gambia. The Secretariat among other duties, is responsible for policy and programme planning, formulation, coordination, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation as well as South-South Cooperation on Population and Reproductive Health issues.

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Unlike other developing countries the Gambia also made national commitments during Nairobi Summit. It has committed to following:

1. Repealing all legislation that discriminate against women, girls and youth in all spheres of life including sexual and reproductive health, economic activities and education by 2030.
2. Strengthening the legal system by building capacities of judges, magistrates and law enforcement agencies to properly manage, adjudicate and enforce

laws that prohibit all forms of gender-based violence as well as child marriage by 2023

3. Strengthening the teaching of comprehensive sexuality education in and out of school through personnel training and the provision of teaching and learning materials
4. Revitalize the Primary Health Care (PHC) system by building, reorienting and realigning the health system towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2025
 - a. Train and deploy 500 midwives to service delivery points by 2025
 - b. Strengthening all health facilities to provide Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (BEmONC) and 6 health facilities to provide quality Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (CEmONC) services
 - c. Creating and funding a budget line for FP commodities and services in the national budget by 2020. We commit to creating and funding a budget line for Family Planning commodities and services in the national budget by 2020.
5. Strengthen the National Statistics System by providing funding to implement the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics which will ensure the regular and timely conduct of decennial population and housing census and scheduled demographic and health surveys for the provision of regular

updates to key national development indicators and to monitor progress towards set ICPD related targets.

The government is considering different actions through The National Population Commission Secretariat but still the country needs more actions for results. However, these may not be possible without international community supports.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to urge us all to come to start an international discussion through PPD and UNFPA jointly on promoting South-South cooperation with financial resources to achieve the Nairobi summit comments through sharing knowledge, capacity building and consultative discussion like more events of international levels to sharing the best practices.

Let's advocate together and ensure political support and investment to address the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in the achievement of the Three Zeros by 2030 through promoting South-South and triangular cooperation.

I appreciate the great efforts made by international community for achieving the three zeros: maternal mortality; unmet need; and gender based violence against women including early child marriage, as guided by the UNFPA. The global community also need to mobilize adequate financial resources from the domestic sources, and from other means including South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC).

UNFPA as an important UN agency for population and development has an obligation to help to strengthen collaborative relations among developing countries considering its convening power, global reach, country presence, technical expertise and impartiality.

I will urge UNFPA to strengthen its collaboration with PPD to ensure achievements of Nairobi Summit in 27 PPD member countries together with same efforts and same actions in order to promote South-South Cooperation and attain SDGs 2030 Agenda.

Thank you!