

17th International Inter-Ministerial Conference on South-South Cooperation in Population and Development titled “**Nairobi Commitments and the 2030 Agenda: Taking stock and looking ahead to post COVID-19 Crisis**”.

Ministerial Session on “**Promoting South-South Cooperation for Attaining Nairobi Commitments and the Agenda 2030**” and Adoption of the Call for Action

CLOSING REMARKS

By

**His Excellency Dr. Shah Faisal Sultan, Hon. Minister, Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination
Government of Pakistan**

H.E. Dr. Yu Xuejun, Vice Minister, National Health Commission, Government of China

H.E. Mr. Harsh Vardhan, Vice-Chair, PPD Board and Hon. Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India

H.E. Ms. Lindiwe Zulu, MP, Secretary, PPD Board and Hon. Minister for Social Development, Government South Africa

H.E. Dr. Isatou Touray, Board Member of PPD and Hon. Vice President, Government of The Gambia

H.E. Mr. Zahid Maleque, Board Executive Committee Member of PPD and Hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh

Dr. Gabriela Rodriguez Ramirez, Board and Executive Committee Member of PPD, Secretary General, National Population Council (CONAPO), Government of Mexico

Dr. Habib Ghedira, Treasurer of PPD Board and President Director-General, National Board of Family and Population, Ministry of Health, Government of Tunisia

Dr. Mohamed Sheikh, Member, PPD Board and Director General, National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), Government of Kenya.

Dr. Natalia Kanem, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Mr. Ben Haj Aissa Adnene, Executive Director, Partners in Population and Development (PPD)

Dr. Hu Hongtao, Senior Advisor to PPD and Moderator of Call for Action Session.

ALL OTHER MANDATORY PROTOCOLS ARE OBSERVED.

Excellencies, Ministers, Colleagues, Distinguished Panelists and Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum, Good Morning, Good Afternoon and Good Evening from Pakistan.

This is an immense pleasure for me to have the privilege of delivering the Closing Remarks of this 17th International Inter-Ministerial Conference on South-South Cooperation in Population and Development titled “**Nairobi Commitments and the 2030 Agenda: Taking stock and looking ahead to post COVID-19 Crisis**”. At the very outset, I wish to thank Partners in Population and Development (PPD), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and National

Health Commission (NHC) of the Government of China for organizing this very important Conference at this critical juncture of human history, when we are fighting with the deadliest pandemic of our lifetime. As we know that the international community assembled in Nairobi in a Global Summit on ICPD at its 25th Anniversary in November 2019, discoursed on achievements and imperatives of ICPD, expressed wide range of commitments and concluded with a set of targets to achieve them including SDGs by 2030. Most important of them were Three Zeros: Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning, Zero Preventable Maternal Death and Zero Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices. While the countries were contemplating on integration of them into their national development agenda, the deadliest Pandemic of the century struck the world and forced the nations to engage their human and material resources to combat the Pandemic. The initial effect of this unknown lethal disease and eventual deaths traumatized and confused the nations, but the fast and decisive turnaround and strongest response by the nations put the pandemic on the spot, although the second wave again became a matter of additional concern.

In Pakistan, we had no preparedness for this unknown disease at the initial stage, but our multipronged approach with optimum use of science and technology took us to the rank of one of the most successful countries in tackling the Pandemic. While we did not even have the simple masks in the first place, our comprehensive strategic campaign with the strongest resolve and agility enabled us even to produce world class ventilators including all other protective gears. We have balanced between the lives and livelihood and ensured that no one is left behind in receiving products and treatments and no one remain hungry due to the Pandemic. Like other countries, we had to pull resources from other sectors, as our fiscal budget did not have allocations for this unforeseen danger. It is not easy to fight such a superspreading disease without having specific vaccine and therapeutics. But the nations effectively tackled the menace repurposing their existing technologies and medications, although it is still raging many countries in the world, albeit with less ferocity. The encouraging matter is that the countries including my own country Pakistan have not ceased to implement its family planning, reproductive health and population programs while combating the Pandemic.

I am very happy and I believe so do my colleagues and partners, that this conference is timely and appropriately organized to find out an effective solution on how we will advance our population and development programs keeping the continued existence of the Pandemic in the perspective. In the past, we had experienced the epidemics and controlled them with vaccines and therapeutics, but they have not totally abandoned the mankind, requiring routine inoculations. We do not know how long we will have to leave with COVID-19 and how far the forthcoming vaccine will enable us to press ahead with our development endeavours. We definitely have to think seriously of marching forward living with the Pandemic for quite some time. Once we will be triumphant against the Pandemic after the specific vaccination and therapeutics come to our hand and we will confine this Pandemic with other diseases. We also have to remain vigilant and put necessary preparedness in place for possible outbreak of any such Pandemic in future.

The sequence of the organization of the Conference was also wonderful and praiseworthy. Two insightful technical sessions addressed by the worlds most acclaimed population and development experts are followed by this Ministerial Session. The most salient features of the precise, innovative and practical solutions emerged from those two sessions have been reflected in the Call for Action we have just adopted.

Today, the Ministerial Session on ***Promoting South-South Cooperation for Attaining Nairobi Commitments and the Agenda 2030***, has provided insightful thoughts and profoundly incisive

discourses by the leadership of our Governing Board, the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer including other Ministers, Executive Committee and Board Members. I would like to thank the UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem for making a thought-provoking Keynote Address and expressing UNFPA's willingness for continued partnership with PPD. The leaders and Ministers invariably emphasized the importance of strengthening South-South Cooperation while providing remarkably visionary guidance on the design, development and implementation of exceedingly increasing programs activities in the member countries within the framework of South-South Cooperation. These invaluable guidance have also been incorporated into the Call for Action we have adopted. The document would be further improved incorporating some of the new elements emerged from the deliberations of today's session.

Excellencies, Colleagues, Friends, Distinguished Panelists and Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have accorded legitimacy to this inspiring Call for Action by adoption in consensus to reap benefits by its implementation, to which we have committed ourselves. The document contains Nairobi Summit Commitments, the Three Zeros and the 2030 Agenda. We urge the countries to integrate the important elements of the documents into our long-term National Development Agenda, which will automatically trickled-down to the formulation of annual policies, design, development and implementation of the relevant program activities and creating a lasting impact in the lives of our peoples. While some of our member countries are well-endowed with technical capacities in articulating coherent strategic vision and functional sustainable policies, other countries require assistance. That is where South-South Cooperation play key role as the interlocutor among the countries for sharing, exchange and transfer of knowledge, expertise and technologies. We also urge the countries to make necessary investments for implementation of the activities contained in the document. Quite naturally, countries will have to allocate resources in the next fiscal budget for prevention and treatment of the COVID-19 Pandemic. A significant amount of resources would be required for procurement of the vaccines once it become available and accessible for the developing countries. Indeed, the developing countries need to seriously pursue science and technology not to rely solely on the mercy of the developed countries since more than 80% of the world population live in the developing countries, while China and India house more than one third of the world population. South-South Cooperation would be comprehensive paradigm of development solutions once it encompasses all walks of life. We believe that our organization will gradually evolve to that stage to do justice to its name. With these few words, I conclude my Closing Remarks and thank you for your attention.