

REMARKS

BY

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PARTNERS IN POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT

AT THE OPENING OF DAY ONE OF

OF THE THIRTEENTH

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

ON

OCTOBER 28, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING FROM PPD ARO, KAMPALA

Hon. Dr. Charles Ayume, Chairperson of Uganda Parliamentary Committee of Health

Your Excellency. Dr. Chris Baryomunsi, MP, Minister of Information and Communication Technology and National Guidance of Uganda

Hon. Fako Moshoeshoe, the Chairperson of NEAPACOH

Dr. Jotham Musinguzi, Director General of the National Population Council of Uganda

Mme Suzane Mandong, Representative of UNFPA, Uganda

Dr. Eliya Zulu, Executive Director, AFIDEP

Distinguished Hon. Members of Parliament from the African continent

Representatives of Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations and Media

Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be with you today at the official opening of this thirteenth meeting of the Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health - NEAPACOH. Let me take this opportunity to thank my colleagues at PPD ARO for inviting me and congratulate them for organizing this important meeting despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic. I also thank all of you colleagues from the respective parliaments and countries of the African continent and beyond who have been able to attend and participate in this meeting. Finding time out of your busy schedules to consistently be part of this networking is a great honor to us and cannot be underestimated. It is indeed a testimony of your commitment to the objectives of NEAPACOH, as you've always given this forum your utmost consideration.

I wish to express my sincerest thanks and gratitude to the government of Uganda for the renewed commitment to SSC and for hosting and supporting PPD ARO and in a special way the Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Health, for all the help that they accord to PPD ARO as we run such important forums and networks. PPD also enjoys special working relationship with UNFPA and just yesterday we have concluded an important two day's workshop on capacity building in SSC for Partner Country Coordinators and National Focal persons in PPD member states in close partnership with UNFPA.

To you Hon. Minister, Dr Chris Baryomunsi, this is not the first time you are with us at this meeting and this is an expression of your great esteem and support to this Network and the promotion of Reproductive Health, Population and Development issues. Thank you so much for finding time out of your busy schedule to be with us once again this morning.

I thought of telling you a bit of background on this unique way of working at PPD. As many of you know, PPD is an Intergovernmental Organization established during the ICPD in Cairo in 1994 with the aim to institutionalize and promote South-South and Triangular Cooperation in FP, RH, Population and Development. Our membership is from only developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. PPD member states represent the voices and aspirations of more than 60% of the world population. Our Headquarters are in Dhaka, Bangladesh where I am seated. Our Africa Regional Office (PPD ARO) was founded in 2007 with the aim to explore and re-invigorate South-South cooperation between PPD African member and non-member countries and I am grateful to the Government of Uganda for the continued support provided to PPD/ARO.

Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

African countries share similar social, political, demographic and geographic environments and south-south cooperation has untapped potential for launching new opportunities and sharing good practices in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Over the years, African countries have gained extensive experiences in SRHR on which to build a new, collaborative effort to initiate change in-country and regionally, in order to improve the health and rights of all people and leave no one behind. Networking and formation of strategic partnerships would broaden the resource base for addressing continental pertinent issues, help diversify experiences and pull expertise for sexual and reproductive health, population and development issues.

I am informed that yesterday this network organized a pre-conference with very engaging discussions on the subjects of Tuberculosis, Lung Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs in Sub-Saharan Africa focusing on Preventing Unsafe Abortion. The focus on lung-health during these COVID-19 pandemic times and preventing unsafe abortions is very relevant as indeed these are challenges not only on the African continent but in the world at large. I thank the team of experts and the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) for facilitating such brilliant deliberations on such challenging issues. I hope some of those recommendations will find way in the Kampala Call to Action that will be approved at the end of this meeting.

I am aware that the objectives of this meeting are to continue sharing progress made, challenges, lessons learned and opportunities with regard to implementation of the 2019 NEAPACOH country commitments and the “Kampala Call to Action” amidst the COVID 19 pandemic. We are also going to put a special focus on accelerating the achievement of the

unfinished agenda of the ICPD and SDGs during and in post COVID-19 Pandemic through South-South Cooperation.

I know it must have been challenging to accelerate the achievements of the ICPD agenda as well as your own NEAPACOH commitments during this roaring COVID-19 pandemic time. I congratulate you all for the fight and resilience that you have put up to live in the new normal.

Honorable Parliamentarians, We all recognize your efforts to this network, and rely on your commitments and positions in your respective national assemblies and public services as well as in society to achieve our common objectives.

As implementers, and champions, of SRH and Population programmes, we look up to you to voice the need of working to improve the lives of our people especially by passing enabling laws and policies. We do have trust in you as strong allies and stakeholders in the field. That is why we believe and are keenly devoted to working with you at your level as Key Actors of Change and central players to the full implementation of international and regional agreements on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Most of our countries have very good and clear policy frameworks which require renewed commitment to support the implementation of these otherwise good policies. In November 2019 while at the Nairobi ICPD +25 summit, a number of our countries led by the top leadership, reechoed their commitment to the implementation of the ICPD PoA and the SDGs by 2030. I, therefore, see a lot of hope in this network to make this a reality.

Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am hopeful that this meeting will provide an opportunity for us all to have a critical look at our own strengths and opportunities as well as areas where we can learn from one other in our future work, networking and sharing of experiences. I am also hopeful that this meeting will further help to reinvigorate and lay a strong foundation for long lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborating arrangements in addressing challenges of reproductive health and development on this continent.

On behalf of PPD and on my own behalf, I am always very pleased to associate myself with these annual NEAPACOH meetings.

We look forward to reinforced collaboration between and among you all members of your respective parliaments and governments, Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations that work on similar issues. PPD, through its regional office- PPD ARO- commits to continue providing an endearing space for mutual exchange of best practices and leveraging resources for facilitating the improvement of FP/RH, Population and Development outcomes in our respective countries.

I wish you all fruitful and resultful meeting.

Thank you very much for listening to me.