



4th China-Africa Conference on Population and Development

Theme: Harnessing Population Dynamics for Health and Sustainable Development: Strengthening China–Africa Cooperation

Opening Remarks

By

Professor Joseph Akinkugbe Adelegan

Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer

Partners in Population and Development (PPD)

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Esteemed Colleagues and Friends,

It is an immense honour to join you today at the 4th China-Africa Conference on Population and Development. I extend warm greetings on behalf of Partners in Population and Development (PPD), an intergovernmental alliance representing 28 member states across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. This forum is a vital platform for knowledge exchange, strategic dialogue, and partnership building to address the demographic and public health challenges that shape sustainable development across the Global South.

We convene at a pivotal moment in human history. The world is witnessing profound demographic transformations characterized by declining fertility rates, accelerated population ageing, and large-scale migration. These shifts have significant implications for health systems, social protection frameworks, and economic planning. They necessitate a **life-course approach** to health that addresses the needs of individuals at every stage of life, from maternal and child health to adolescent health, reproductive health, adult care, and geriatric services. Central to this approach is the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), which remain fundamental for improving population health outcomes, enhancing human capital, and enabling equitable and inclusive development. The family unit remains a cornerstone of these interventions, influencing health behaviours, wellbeing, and intergenerational development.

Africa is at the forefront of these demographic dynamics. With a population surpassing 1.5 billion in 2024 and projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, Africa's youth population of nearly 294 million aged 15–24 represents both a historic opportunity and a strategic imperative. This **demographic dividend** can catalyse socio-economic transformation, but only if countries invest strategically in health, education, employment, and gender-responsive policies. The continent faces persistent health challenges, including high maternal and child mortality, widespread infectious diseases, malnutrition, and an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases. Achieving **universal health coverage (UHC)**, strengthening SRH services, and expanding access to family planning, contraception, and reproductive health education are critical steps toward maximizing the potential of this demographic advantage.

China and Kenya provide instructive examples of proactive, population-centred health governance. China, through its **Healthy China 2030 strategy**, prioritizes integrated health



system strengthening, family-friendly policies, and equitable health service delivery across all age cohorts. Kenya, through the **National Population Policy for Sustainable Development** and the **Universal Health Coverage Policy 2020–2030**, is actively reforming its health sector to ensure equitable access, reduce financial barriers, and invest in human capital development. Both countries exemplify how coherent policy frameworks, aligned with demographic trends and supported by robust health financing, can promote health-enabling pathways for national development.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) are central to these efforts. The longstanding collaboration between China and African countries illustrates how technical expertise, policy innovation, and capacity-building initiatives can be exchanged and co-designed to address shared population and health challenges. SSTC fosters **mutual learning**, enabling countries with similar development contexts to adapt successful interventions while strengthening regional networks. Triangular Cooperation amplifies this effect by leveraging the technical expertise and financial resources of a third partner often a multilateral organization or donor—creating a multiplier effect for knowledge transfer, program implementation, and innovation. These mechanisms have been critical in advancing SRH programs, digital health interventions, demographic intelligence systems, and integrated service delivery models across multiple countries.

Innovative financing is a decisive factor in unlocking the demographic dividend and achieving UHC. Traditional funding streams are often insufficient to meet the growing demand for SRH services, adolescent health programs, and population-based interventions. PPD and its partners are pioneering **blended financing instruments**, combining public, private, and philanthropic resources to catalyse investment in health systems and demographic transition programs. These include **development impact bonds**, regional pooled procurement mechanisms to reduce the cost of essential SRH commodities, and **catalytic investment funds** to support health workforce development, digital health solutions, and demographic data infrastructure. By linking finance to measurable outcomes, these mechanisms ensure efficiency, accountability, and sustainability while unlocking new avenues for South-South partnerships.

The China-Africa Knowledge Centre for Health Development Cooperation, recently launched in Beijing, represents a tangible manifestation of these principles. It serves as a hub for technical exchange, research collaboration, and policy dialogue, enabling African countries to leverage China's experience in health systems strengthening, population management, and technological innovation. Complementary initiatives in Kenya, including the collaboration between the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) and the China Population and Development Research Centre, have advanced capacity-building programs, policy innovation, and the dissemination of evidence-based best practices in SRH and public health.

The objectives of this conference are to consolidate the gains of previous China-Africa engagements, deepen technical cooperation in population and health, and identify **policy priorities, financing strategies, and operational frameworks** for scaling successful interventions. We aim to achieve a replicable model of China-Africa cooperation that can inform broader South-South efforts in other regions, ensuring that demographic potential is translated into sustainable development outcomes. Through structured dialogue across sessions on **population dynamics, health system strengthening, data-driven policy, and SSTC frameworks**, we will align strategies to maximize impact and ensure equitable health outcomes for all population cohorts.



Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

As we embark on this conference, let us reaffirm our collective commitment to **health-enabling pathways** for Africa-China population development. Let us leverage innovative financing, robust SRH programs, and SSTC mechanisms to ensure that every individual regardless of age, gender, or location can access quality health services, exercise their reproductive rights, and participate fully in social and economic life. The demographic dividend of Africa, combined with China's technical expertise and the solidarity inherent in South-South and Triangular Cooperation, offers a historic opportunity to accelerate health and development outcomes across the Global South.

I am confident that the deliberations and exchanges over the coming days will strengthen China-Africa partnerships, enhance the delivery of SRH and population services, mobilize innovative financing mechanisms, and advance sustainable, evidence-driven development strategies. Together, we can build resilient, inclusive societies where population dynamics are harnessed as engines of health, prosperity, and social wellbeing.

On behalf of Partners in Population and Development and our Dhaka Headquarters, I extend my deepest gratitude to all partners, delegates, and stakeholders for your unwavering commitment to advancing the ICPD vision and building a shared future for China and Africa.

I wish us all a productive, insightful, and transformative conference.

Thank you.