



REMARKS

BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ZIMBABWE, HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. E. D.
MANGAGWA**

AT THE

**20TH INTERNATIONAL INTER-
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH-
SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION
IN POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

VICTORIA FALLS

9 OCTOBER 2023

Director of Ceremonies;

Session Chair; Honourable Ms Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development of the Republic of South Africa;

Your Excellency, Former President of the Republic of Tanzania, Mr Jakaya M. Kikwete;

Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Matabeleland Province; Cde. R. Moyo;

Minister of Health and Child Care of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Dr. D. Mombeshora;

Other Ministers here present;

The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe, Mr. E. Kallon;

The Regional Director for United Nations Population Fund, Ms Lydia Zigomo;

Your Worship the Mayor of the City of Victoria Falls, Cllr. T. D. Moyo;
Senior Government Officials;

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Comrades and Friends.

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you all to Zimbabwe for this important event leading up to the commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development.

At the onset, may I thank the Partners in Population and Development and the United Nations Population Fund for selecting Zimbabwe to be the host for this historic Conference. Please feel at home away from home.

During your stay, I invite you to visit the Majestic Victoria Falls, **Mosi-Oa Tunya**, which is one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and to also sample various tourist attractions our country has to offer.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As we gather to take stock and reflect on this important subject before us, I am pleased to highlight that over

the years, the Government of Zimbabwe has made significant strides in implementing the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development.

To-date, the total population of Zimbabwe has doubled from 7.6 million in 1982 to 15 million in 2022. This increase in the population growth rate is attributable to an overall improved quality of life. Additionally, the decline in HIV and AIDS-related mortality rates owing to the increased availability of Anti-Retroviral Treatment as well as reduced mother to child HIV transmission has had positive impacts.

Similarly, fertility rate has steadily declined, while life expectancy at birth has increased due to comprehensive and coordinated socio-economic and health care interventions.

It is notable that females have a higher life expectancy compared to their male counterparts, while life expectancy has risen to 65 years.

Zimbabwe's national Maternal Mortality Ratio is on a decreasing trend, from 651 per 100 000 live births in 2015, to 362 per 100,000 live births, in 2022.

The multi-pronged and people-centered national development agenda has registered progress on the social development front. Consequently, Zimbabwe has improved in the Human Development Index rankings.

My Administration is scaling up the implementation and promotion of sustainable economic growth, employment and wealth creation towards accelerating national development, modernisation and industrialisation. We are determined, to lift many more of our people out poverty into a higher quality of life.

Guided by our National Vision and the National Development Strategy, our country is on course to achieve an upper middle-income society by 2030, while also addressing the continental and global aspirations under the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa Agenda 2063, respectively.

Our robust policies have resulted in the sustained, inclusive and equitable GDP growth; promotion of new enterprise development, employment and job creation as well as robust climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes.

Increased investment in health, water, sanitation education, energy, roads, housing and other social amenities are impacting on the quality of life of our people.

Additionally, existing social safety nets such as the public health and education assistance, drought relief, public works and input support schemes for vulnerable families, small holder and communal farmers are being continuously broadened. The introduction and wide adoption of Pfumvudza/Intwasa Climate Proofed Agriculture Programme, among other comprehensive policy initiatives, has seen our country realise national food and nutrition security.

Leveraging on the increased access to quality and affordable education, our country is ensuring that high literacy rates translate to an enhanced quality of life of our people and the economy as a whole. Further, the introduction of our Heritage Based Education 5.0 Model is fast transforming, industrialising and modernising our economy. Our youth and learners are now equipped to produce goods and services.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On gender equality and women empowerment, Zimbabwe is dedicated to achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women. The National Constitution of Zimbabwe specifically prohibits discrimination based on gender and outlaws all forms of Gender Based Violence.

My Government has made bold decisions to ensure the inclusion of women in Parliament, Cabinet, local authorities as well as other decision making entities across national institutions.

The Constitutionally established Gender Commission is entrusted with monitoring the effective implementation of gender-responsive laws and policies.

Lessons from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the importance of the requisite social safety nets to protect women-owned business as well as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises from external shocks that may lead to the loss of lives and livelihoods.

It is equally important to adopt effective pathways for the holistic development and empowerment of youth. Zimbabwe is a youthful nation where 67.7% of the population is below the age of 35. Hence, Government is ensuring that the youth play a pivotal role in the national development agenda.

To date, youth enjoy a parliamentary quota with a notable number having been appointed into Cabinet and within other strategic national institutions.

At a policy level, the National Youth Policy provides a framework for creating an enabling environment for stakeholders to implement youth development and empowerment programmes in a coordinated manner.

Education and skills development are indispensable for the sustainability of youth participation in the economy and governance sphere. As such, we continue to invest in Vocational Training Centres and skills development programmes which equip trainees with entrepreneurial skills.

Meanwhile, age responsive information on reproductive health continues to be availed to the youth and adolescences. The criminalization of early and forced child marriages and other harmful practices is facilitating the safe transition of children into adulthood.

Distinguished Delegates;

In a bid to track our commitments to the International Conference on Population and Development, the Government of Zimbabwe established a multi-sectoral National Taskforce which periodically meets to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Taskforce employs a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of- Society Approach.

Similarly, we call for seamless coordination to scale up South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

I am pleased to highlight that through such partnerships, Zimbabwe has managed to fill gaps in health service provision. This has seen medical and other health specialists coming to our country to assist us in the health service delivery sector, from as far afield as the People's Republic of China and Cuba.

Periodic fellowships and capacity building programmes offered by Partners in Population and Development have also resulted in members of our health workforce attaining specialised post graduate qualifications. In this regard, we remain grateful to partner countries such as the Republics of Egypt, India and South Africa, for providing these scholarships.

Exchange programmes with other member countries of the Partners in Population and Development, are equally appreciated.

Internally, my Government has increased the number of fully fledged Medical Schools for the training of doctors and specialised health personnel towards increased patient- doctor ratio as well as availing specialised health care to grassroots communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Zimbabwe remains committed to Universal Health Coverage. Remarkable progress has been made towards improving availability and accessibility of Reproductive, Maternal, New Born Child and Adolescent Health services, at all levels of our society.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Government of Zimbabwe successfully mobilized the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and rolled a robust national vaccination programme. We continue adhering to the Family Planning 2030 Commitments and the Compact of Commitment with regards to the provision of technical and financial resources for the family planning programmes.

This has resulted in the domestic funding, for Family Planning, rising within the national health budget, from 1.7% in 2013 to 2.4% in 2022. Our national health budget allocation was at 14.9% in 2022, in line with the 15% aspiration outlined in the Abuja Declaration.

The overall effectiveness of the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council has had overall positive ripple effects on our Family Planning and Reproductive Health services.

In spite of these success milestones, Zimbabwe faces challenges in the Health Sector that we believe can be tackled through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

The most pronounced problem being the continued albatross of the illegal sanctions imposed on our country by some Western countries. Meanwhile, our government's investment in the training of doctors, nurses, laboratory scientists and radiographers is being negatively affected by the attrition of Health Workers due to increased emigration to developed countries.

It is, therefore, important for us, through the South-South and Triangular Cooperation, to interrogate this phenomenon, share ideas and learn from each other towards addressing the push and pull factors..

In the same vein, collaborative multi-country Research and Development is essential to promote local capacities with regards the manufacture of drugs and related commodities that better meet the needs of our respective population.

In Zimbabwe, Innovation Hubs and Industrial Parks within our Universities have developed viable start ups such as those in the production of medical oxygen, ultrasound gel and other medical devices, gadgets and consumables.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

As, I conclude may I reiterate the need to scale up the provision of maternal health and reduction of child mortality as a vital aspect of the attainment of sustainable development.

The mantra "No woman should die whilst giving birth" remains our guiding motto. Further, let us consolidate our engagement and

partnerships within the South-South and Triangular Cooperation framework to unlock more resources for our respective national development plans towards a prosperous and healthy life for all.

Domestic financing and innovative interventions that promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women, remains critical.

Ultimately, the burden and responsibility to realise development that leaves no one and no place behind, within our respective countries is on us. Collectively, we must deliver.

With these remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare this 20th International Inter-Ministerial Conference on South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Population and Development officially opened.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and a memorable stay in Zimbabwe.

God bless you all.

I thank you.