



The Republic of Uganda

Speech

By

Hon. David Bahati

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Development (Planning)**

**at the
National ICPD25 Symposium**

Imperial Royale Hotel

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Honourable Members of Parliament
Chairperson of the Board of National Population Council
UNFPA Representative, Mr. Alain Sibenaler
The Heads of Diplomatic Missions
District Leaders
Religious leaders
All distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

You are warmly welcome to the National symposium bringing us together ahead of the Nairobi Summit that will mark the 25th birthday of advancing the International conference on Population and Development Programme of Action.

Allow me express my most profound gratitude to all of you for sparing your time to participate in the national symposium. This is true testimony of how committed you are towards the issues that are of high national as well as global concern. I extend special appreciation to the symposium organizers, most especially, the National Population Council and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Let me congratulate you upon the successful consultative processes that have been taking place, beginning with the youth event that was organized on August 27, 2019, the Civil Society Organizations meeting held on September 24, 2019 and the consultations with government Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs).

I am happy that the canvassing for the progress on the ICPD Program of action has helped in highlighting the achievements and gaps since Cairo and will enable Uganda renew her commitment to drive the population and development agenda forward.

I am also delighted that each constituency, including the youth, Civil Society and MDAs has provided separate commitments that are aligned with the third National

Development Plan (NDPIII). These are fundamental in informing the statement that H.E, the President of the Republic of Uganda will make in Nairobi.

Ladies and gentlemen

The ICPD programme of Action shifted the emphasis of population policies away from slowing population growth to improving the lives of individuals, particularly women. It further set out to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, improve family planning access, reduce child and maternal mortality, increase life expectancy, achieve universal access to and completion of secondary education, eliminate harmful practices against women (such as genital cutting and forced early marriages and the consequences of teenage pregnancy) and advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

As we reflect on the collective journey, twenty-five years after Cairo, we need to think critically about what has changed and what has probably not improved. As a country, we have made significant progress in implementing the ICPD because the objectives of the Program of Action were key considerations in the national development agenda and aspirations and were integrated in the national development frameworks from the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, Vision 2040 and in the first and second National Development Plans.

Some of the achievements to date include:

- Life expectancy has greatly improved from 43 years in 1991 to 63 years in 2014, implying that the population remains more productive as a result of improved access to health services and adoption of health life styles. As the number of older persons continues to grow, so does the need to address the increased incidence of age-related fragility and the provision of high-quality health care, while enabling individuals to live longer, healthier and more productive lives.

- Maternal mortality decreased from 569/100,000 in 1995 to 336/100,000 live births due to improved antenatal care, skilled attendance at birth and increasing access to family planning services.
- The country has achieved incredible improvement in child survival and indeed the infant mortality rate at 43 per 1,000 live births surpassed the target for NDPII of 45 per 1,000 live births as a result of immunization, nutrition and child care practices.
- Government launched Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy to provide primary education for all children in 1997 and Uganda was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to introduce Universal Secondary Education in 2007. This boosted school enrolment and retention.
- Infrastructural investments across electricity, transport, information and communications technology, water, and sanitation. Better infrastructure means improved services and access and improvement in the environment for quality business investments.
- We set a goal of attaining middle income status by 2020. Every Ugandan now earns on average US\$825 per year. By the end of NDPII next year, we will have moved closer to the middle income goal of US\$1,039.

Despite the progress, there are still a number of challenges

- Aware that “sexual and reproductive health of girls and women are at the heart of poverty eradication and sustainable development”, we should not continue looking on when the teenage pregnancy rate has stagnated at 25% over the last three decades. We must collectively invest in universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services to address the urgent needs of adolescents and youth. In addition to improving education quality and coverage and expanding access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services to help reap the potential gains from the demographic dividend.

- High child marriage before 18 years is unbearable and as a country we should make focused efforts to end it and promote gender equity and women empowerment so as to reduce gender based violence and the ripple effects of poverty.
- About 78% of Uganda's population are below 30 years of age. More than half Uganda's population are under the age of 15. It is crucial that these young people have the **knowledge and skills to succeed in life** if we are to break the cycle of poverty. Ensuring all young people, including the most marginalised and disadvantaged, can **unlock their potential** through access to decent work will reduce the current high dependency burden and drive progress towards sustainable, inclusive development.
- Uganda's GDP is still largely dominated by low level of productivity in agriculture, minerals and tourism. Over 68% of the population is in the subsistence economy, with little or no commercial endeavours. As a result of the low productivity, job creation in the economy has not kept pace with the surge in the numbers of youths joining the labour force. Sound economic policies are needed to transform economic growth into human development gains. Industrialization should focus on areas of comparative advantage, including building on agriculture and the extractive industries that would support the country to move up the ladder of value chains. But not forgetting our largest population – the young people. We need to create jobs for our big young population that will soon graduate to the working age group.
- Unequal distribution of resources, power, and wealth, combined with inequitable social norms that have sustained persistent inequalities in reproductive health, education and wealth distribution.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

The third National Development Plan (NDPIII) provides the country's efforts to invest in human capital. The Plan gives a unified direction for the country, including mobilizing people and resources to achieve a common goal and faster socio-economic transformation by focusing on specific areas of maximum opportunity. NDPIII, if well

implemented will reposition the country within the global sphere and take more steps towards the renewed ICPD commitment and the sustainable development goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, allow me recognize and appreciate the support of our partners towards improving the social and economic status of our people, especially women and children through different interventions at national, international and local levels. I encourage you to support the youth and women to take advantage of government schemes and programmes to improve their livelihoods by starting up small income generating activities and other innovative ventures instead of engaging in risk behaviours like alcohol, drugs, and sexual immorality which are counter development counterproductive and precarious to socio economic development.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Uganda's commitment to the renewed promise of the International Commitment on Population and Development as a true trajectory towards Vision 2040, the demographic dividend and the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving the promise will no doubt lead to the transformation that we are aspiring to achieve by 2040.

Thank you for listening to me.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Summary of progress on selected indicators

Indicator	1994	World 2019	Africa 2019	Uganda 2019
Life expectancy at birth	65 years	72 years	62 years	64 years
TFR	World - 2.9 Africa - 6.7	2.5	4.8	5.4
Under 5 mortality Rate	89/ 1,000 Live births	41/1,000	74/1,000	64/1,000
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate		78%	47%	39%
Unmet need for family planning		12%	20%	28%
Adolescent Pregnancy Rate	65/1,000 births per adolescent women	44/1,000	101/ 1,000	103/1,000