



**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations**

Statement by

**His Royal Highness Prince Hlangusemphi
Honourable Minister of Economic Planning and Development**

**at the
48th Session of the
Commission on Population and Development**

**Under Agenda Item 4: General Debate on national experience in
population matters: realizing the future we want: integrating
population issues into sustainable development, including in the
post-2015 development agenda**

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Mr. President,

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you and the other members of Bureau on your election and state that my delegation and I look forward to fruitful deliberations. My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of the Republic of South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 + China (G77+China).

Mr. President,

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a small country which is experiencing a demographic transition typified by a decrease in the proportion of children below 15 years and an increase of the population in the working age groups 15-64 years, largely due to declining fertility. Population census results indicate that the share of the population below 15 years decreased from 51 % in 1976 to 47% in 1997 and to 41% in 2007. This happened whilst the proportion of those aged 15-64 years increased from 46% in 1976 to 51 % in 1997 and to 56% in 2007. It is projected that by 2022, the proportion of the working age population will have increased to 62% while that of the population below 15 years will have decreased to 36%. In fact the working age population segment is projected to grow more rapidly than the overall national population growth rate in the coming decades.

This demographic transition presents a window of opportunity for spectacular economic prosperity, and the Government of Kingdom of Swaziland recognises the urgent need to put in place and implement appropriate macroeconomic and human capital development policies which are an imperative for reaping the full benefit of the demographic dividend. Most importantly, action is being taken to upscale investment in a bid to transform the large numbers of young people into a productive force during their working years.

Mr. President,

At this juncture, may I state that the country has taken action to integrate population issues into policy development, planning and programming processes, in response to the call by the International Conference on Population and Development-Programme of Action (ICPD-PoA). The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland's over-arching development framework, the National Development Strategy (NDS), underscores the critical importance of integrating population factors in development planning. The NDS called for the formulation and implementation of an

explicit population policy as an integral part of the country's goal for achieving sustainable development. Subsequently, a National Population Policy whose main goal is to improve the quality of life of all Swazis by influencing the population trends as well as responding to emerging challenges was launched by the Head of State, His Majesty King Mswati III, is being implemented.

In conformity with the strategies articulated in the National Population Policy to promote integration of population issues into policy and planning frameworks, a lot of effort has been put towards capacity building. Guidelines whose ultimate purpose is to enhance evidence based planning and programming with practical step by step guides on how to integrate population factors into development processes have also been developed.

Mr. President,

Sensitisation of policy makers including parliamentarians, senior officials from governmental and non- governmental organisations, civil society on the interrelationship between population, economic growth and sustainable development, is being undertaken on an ongoing basis. The World Population Day is commemorated annually and subject to availability of funds, is also celebrated at Tinkhundla (constituency) level. The country undertook a national campaign to commemorate the **World at 7 Billion** under which various activities were incorporated, including: sensitisation of high level policy makers; a national poster contest; extensive dissemination of information through media and; launch of the State of the World Population Report. The Head of State, His Majesty, King Mswati III was the Guest of Honour at the commemoration of World Population Day, where the “**World at 7 Billion**” campaign was launched. This advocacy at the highest level, served to bring to the attention of the nation at large, the critical importance of population issues to sustainable development and the need to ensure that they are fully integrated in national development policies, plans and programmes.

It is gratifying to note Mr. President, that although we have encountered challenges in our endeavour to integrate population issues in development processes, our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. For example, population issues have been integrated in key national policy and strategy documents including the National Development Strategy, National Youth Policy, National Population Policy, National Health Policy, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights policy, National Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Strategy

2008-2015 and Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan. It is further worth mentioning that the country is in the process of revising the NDS to incorporate the post 2015 development agenda and this revision is currently under discussion by the relevant areas of government. During this revision, a deliberate effort is being made to ensure that population issues are integrated. Plans are underway to revise the population policy and align it with the revised NDS, once approved. This revision will present an opportunity to incorporate the ICPD agenda and the sustainable development agenda beyond 2015.

Mr. President,

Let me, at this juncture, point out that despite these achievements, a lot still needs to be done in the area of integration of population issues in sectoral plans and programmes. Although planners and related staff have been trained on integration, this is still a work in progress as there is an acute need for practical assistance in the application of these skills in developing sectoral plans and programmes. There is a concurrent need to upscale advocacy efforts to popularise the ICPD agenda beyond 2014 and promote the integration of population issues. Furthermore, extensive effort needs to be put towards addressing the paucity of research and limited in-depth analysis of statistical data.

In conclusion, Mr. President, may I state that, following the ICPD, which was a defining moment in the history of international cooperation in the area of population and development, the country has developed national policies, strategies and programmes to accelerate progress towards the attainment of its goals and objectives and has made considerable progress. However may I categorically state that the classification of Swaziland as a Middle Income Country as well as the recent reclassification of the Country as per the UNFPA current Strategic Plan, which precludes the country from receiving support for service delivery and the resultant drastic cut in funding, will militate against the achievement of the goals and objectives of the ICPD beyond 2014 agenda. Nevertheless the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland remains fully committed towards the ICPD agenda beyond 2014 and will continue to work tirelessly towards ensuring that it is integrated in the post 2015 development agenda for sustainable development.

I thank you Mr. President.