

STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

AT THE OPENING OF THE

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

ON

JUNE 29, 2016

AT

SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO

The Executive Director, PPD, Dr Joe Thomas

The Chairman, NEAPACOH, Dr Blessing Chebundo

The Director General, National Population Council Secretariat,

Executive Director, African Institute for Development Policy,

UNFPA Country Representative,

Hon. Members of Parliament both from Uganda and outside Uganda

Representatives of Development Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to start by welcoming all of you to our beautiful country, Uganda. My special welcome goes to those of you who are visiting Uganda for the first time. For those of you, who have been to Uganda before, you are welcome again. It is my sincere hope that the organizers of this meeting have made adequate provision for you to have time off your meeting programme, so that you can visit and see for yourselves what Uganda can offer outside Kampala.

I am delighted to have been invited, to be here this morning, to officially open this meeting of a Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health in Africa. I am particularly delighted that the theme of this conference is **“From Millennium Development and Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Challenges and Opportunities for Parliaments to enhance Reproductive Health/Family Planning”**. I am very pleased that the organizers of this meeting thought about this theme – happening at a time when the international community agreed, at the UN in New

York in September 2015, to an ambitious new development framework that replaced the MDGs, that is, the “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) aimed at ending poverty by 2030 and universally promote shared economic prosperity, social development and environmental protection.

A 2014 review of progress in achieving the MDGs revealed that the health-related MDGs in particular (MDG 4 on reducing child mortality, MDG 5 on improving maternal health, and MDG 6 on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) remain unfinished business in the post-2015 development agenda. It is therefore essential to continue positioning Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) high on the continent’s development agenda. For this to happen, Reproductive Health including Family Planning should be considered as unfinished business requiring renewed vigour and determination in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is imperative that strong political will, national ownership and support is built and maintained in order to consolidate the gains made, complete the unfinished business and sustain momentum for the success of SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are not short of a policy environment to facilitate our work in bringing higher up to scale issues of reproductive health including family planning, population and development. We still have frameworks like Maputo Plan of Action, which is a forward looking

policy framework for Africa whose main objective is universal access to RH services. The Abuja Declaration which called on African countries to devote at least 15% of national budgets to health is still as valid as it were. We have the Accra Agenda for Action which aims to ensure national ownership, alignment, harmonization and accountability for aid effectiveness. The MDGs that recognized the importance of SRHR globally are still valid. At the Summit for Family Planning that was held in London in 2012, countries made family planning commitments to be achieved by the year 2020. We now have the SDGs that were adopted by countries at the UN in September 2015.

What is refreshing and energizing is that our countries, at the highest political level have ratified these policy frameworks. All these, and indeed many other frameworks I have not mentioned, put together, are simply about delivering a better Africa, a better world for the benefit of generations into the future. Despite clear policy frameworks, the overarching problem remains a lack of implementation of these otherwise good policies.

For us in Uganda, we are happy that the London FP summit marked a turning point for the family planning movement. Following the London Summit, a number of progressive milestones in the family planning movement have been realized. These include increased funding for FP supplies, positive statements on family planning by leaders at all levels, and improved distribution mechanism for FP supplies. In addition the country launched a National Costed

Implementation Plan for family planning, as a national blue print for guiding implementation as well as resource allocations for family planning.

We should, therefore, have governments engaged to implement the frameworks they sign onto. In this regard, it is gratifying that the organizers of this meeting have enlisted the participation of Members of Parliament who play a very important role in this regard. Parliamentarians are key players who can through your roles remove legal and administrative barriers to access to high quality health services; you can influence resource allocation and ensure clear budget lines and expenditures on health; and you can also hold national governments to account on commitments they have made as well as ensure that funds from both the national budgets and donors are spent appropriately. The answers to addressing health issues including sexual and reproductive health problems that confront us are therefore not far-fetched and within our means.

Distinguished participants

Evidence from research shows us that there are four (4) pillars to reduce maternal mortality: 1) antenatal care 2) emergency obstetric care; 3) skilled attendance at birth; and 4) family planning. I am very glad, therefore, that the theme of this meeting is From MDs to SDGs: Challenges and Opportunities for Parliaments to enhance Reproductive Health/Family Planning.

I have had a look at the programme for this conference and it clearly offers a diverse menu of reproductive health and family planning topics. I am also happy that you will discuss topics on using research evidence for development in Africa as well as enhancing the demographic dividend for socio-economic transformation of Africa. I have no doubt that members of parliament will benefit from expositions by the experts present here as well as from the experiences and best practices coming from the different countries that will be shared in the next two days.

At this NEAPACOH meeting of 2016, I hope, and I am optimistic that space will be provided for you to understand what the SDGs are; the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs; and what you need to do to build and sustain the momentum for political will for reproductive health and family planning within the of context of the SDGs.

It is also my hope that you all have a pleasant stay here at Speke Resort Munyonyo, which is a few minutes' drive from the City Centre of Kampala. I hope you will also have time to visit some other parts of our country to appreciate the beauty of Uganda.

It is now my pleasure to declare this conference officially open and I wish you fruitful deliberations.