

SPEECH

BY

**DR. JOTHAM MUSINGUZI
REGIONAL DIRECTOR PARTNERS IN POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE**

AT

**THE OPENING OF THE REGIONAL MEETING OF
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES OF HEALTH IN EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO, KAMPALA

SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

Honorable Guest of Honour, Hon. Deputy Speaker of Parliament of Uganda,
Rebecca Kadaga

Hon. Minister of Health of Uganda, Dr Stephen Mallingua

The Chairman, SEAPACOH, Dr Blessing Chebundo

The Deputy Executive Director, AIFDP, Dr Elia Zulu

Distinguished Hon. Members of Parliament both from Uganda and outside
Uganda

Representatives of Development Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all I wish to start by extending a very warm welcome to all of you to this regional meeting of parliamentary committees of health in Eastern and Southern Africa

Secondly, I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of PPD Africa Regional Office and on my own behalf, to welcome you to our country Uganda. I would like to thank you for the valuable time you have taken off your busy schedules to travel all the way to be here with us in this meeting; Thank you once again.

Guest of Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to share with some background information on Partners in Population and Development (PPD).

In 1994, in Cairo, Egypt, representatives of the countries of the world came together in the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and developed a new paradigm for reproductive health, the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA). At the ICPD, developing countries endorsed the concept of south-south cooperation that has since become the core model of Partners in Population and Development (PPD). Mr. Guest of Honour, the

dominant capacity of implementing reproductive health, population and development policies and programmes lies in developing countries, yet the usual mode for providing assistance has historically been north-south. The idea was therefore for the PPD to “broker” arrangements for the horizontal transfer of technical and programmatic expertise from one southern country to another (South – South cooperation).

Uganda is host to the PPD Africa Region office which was opened in February 2007 in order to help invigorate south-south collaboration within Africa. The PPD Africa office was established to ensure an improved sexual and reproductive health environment and better coordination of south-south collaboration activities and programs in Africa. The Vision of PPD Africa is “a continent that meets its Reproductive Health needs promotes the Population and Development agenda and thereby addresses poverty, through South-South Cooperation”. Its Mission is “to provide a platform for the promotion of and resource mobilization for Reproductive Health and Population and Development in Africa through advocacy and policy dialogue, networking and building strategic partnerships in the region and sharing of experiences and good practices”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

PPD ARO sees a great, yet not fully tapped potential of working and collaborating with parliamentarians in promoting issues of Family Planning Reproductive Health, Population and Development at country, regional and continental levels. We believe that by working together with parliamentarians across countries and regions, the benefits of networking, sharing of information, experiences and best practices can be realised. That is why PPD ARO, in line with its strategic pillar of advocacy and policy dialogues supports interventions geared at working with and engaging policy makers including parliamentarians. Therefore PPD ARO strongly associates and supports meetings like this one because they rhyme well with one of our core strategic interventions of advocacy and policy dialogue. Indeed, PPD ARO was able to organise a similar meetings

like this one in September 2008 and 2009 in this same venue, and it is gratifying to note that many of you present here attended those meetings. PPD also organised and supported a Strategic Plan development meeting for SEAPACOH which was held in April last year. And I am glad that the actual meeting provides an opportunity to share experiences regarding the implementation of this SP. All this work we do and continue doing with parliamentarians is because of the recognition of the important role you play in shaping human destiny.

I am aware that, in addition to sharing country experiences regarding the implementation of the SEAPCOH SP, the implementation of the 2009 resolutions, this meeting is being organized under a very important and timely theme, which is **“Repositioning family planning and Reproductive Health in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region”**. We, at PPD ARO believe that increasing investment in family planning and reproductive health is very important for the economic and social development of our region. Why is family planning important? Simply because it helps among others; having healthy women and children, breaking the cycle of poverty among families, ensuring women’s full contribution to the economy and therefore accelerating the achievement of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Ladies and gentlemen

PPD ARO believes and is keenly devoted to work and continue working with parliamentarians as change agents and central players to the full implementation of international and regional agreements on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our countries have very good and clear policy frameworks but the overriding problem on our continent remains a lack of political will and commitment to support the implementation of these otherwise good policies. For instance, performance on Abuja Declaration of devoting at least 15 % of the national budgets for health has remained disappointing. Of all sub Saharan African countries, only one country Malawi, has reached the 15% target.

Implementation of the Maputo PoA at country level remains poor and uneven. As you are aware the AU Summit Heads of State extended the life of the Maputo Plan of Action from 2010 to 2015 to coincide with the global summit for the MDGs review. Consequently, we are all asked to work in a joint effort for a better implementation of this continental framework.

It is gratifying to note that we have a pool of experts and policy makers committed to health issues, population and development in this room and I am encouraged and optimistic that by the end of this meeting we will come up with concrete and realistic and workable recommendations. We also hope that this meeting will provide an opportunity for us all to have a critical look at our own strengths and opportunities as well as areas where we can learn from each other. We also hope that the meeting will help to lay a strong foundation for long lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborating arrangements among countries, in addressing health issues including SRHR, population and development.

On behalf of PPD Africa Regional Office, I would like to assure you that we very much appreciate the valuable time you have taken off your busy schedules and to travel all the way, to be here with us in Kampala for this meeting. I wish you a very productive and fruitful meeting.

I thank you.