

SPEECH

By
Dr. Jotham Musinguzi
Regional Director, Partners in Population and Development Africa
Regional Office (PPD ARO)

AT

THE OPENING OF
REGIONAL MEETING OF SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES ON HEALTH (SEAPACOH)

“Repositioning Family Planning and Reproductive Health in
Africa: Lessons learnt, Challenges and Opportunities”

Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

September 27, 2011

Our Guest of Honour – Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga,
Speaker of Parliament of Uganda

The Session Chair, Hon. Sylvia Ssinabulya Namabidde

H.E. Mr. Jerry P. Lanier, U.S. Ambassador in Uganda

Hon. Blessing Chebundo, Chairperson, SEAPACOH

Mr. Harry Jooseery (PhD), Executive Director, PPD

Dr. Janet Byaruhanga, Representing the African Union Commission

Dr. Wilfred Ochan, Representing UNFPA Representative

Representatives of Development Partners

Distinguished participants

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Partners in Population and Development Africa Regional Office, I wish to start by extending a warm welcome to you all.

We are very glad to welcome all of you to this important meeting. A special welcome to members of SEAPACOH who are in Kampala for the fourth time. I wish to thank all of you for being able to spare your precious time and to be able to come and participate in this important meeting.

As you are well aware, this year's theme is "**Repositioning Family Planning and Reproductive Health in Africa: Lessons Learnt, Challenges and Opportunities**". We, at PPD believe that increasing investment in family planning and reproductive health is very important for the socio-economic

development of this region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me contextualize this meeting. The main objective of this meeting is to bring together Parliamentarians who sit on Committees of Health in the various Parliaments of the countries of Southern and Eastern Africa so that we can, together, chat out strategies to improve the funding and policy environment for Reproductive Health and Family Planning. In addition, we would like to strengthen policymakers appreciation of the important and vital linkages between RH, Family Planning, Population and Development as well as increase the visibility and contribution of Reproductive Health and Family Planning to sustainable development in the region. It is our hope that as we deliberate on repositioning Family Planning and Reproductive Health in Africa, policymakers like yourselves will be able to increase your commitment and also to show leadership and stewardship in the context of seeing it as part of your responsibility to support family planning in the region.

We at PPD are convinced that bringing together Parliamentarians who have representative, legislative, budget appropriation and oversight roles is a unique opportunity to achieve the twin objectives of increasing resources and improving policy environment for reproductive health and family planning in the region.

Ladies and gentlemen, as elected representatives, parliamentarians can speak on behalf of the people who are affected by and who benefit from the health system. As legislators, they can champion economic and social reforms and promote good governance in all sectors including legislative matters on reproductive health and family planning. In terms of budget appropriation, MPs have the tremendous responsibility of allocating necessary resources.

Regarding oversight, MPs hold the executive accountable on ensuring proper and enabling policies and programmes and their timely implementation. It is our hope at PPD that Parliamentarians will continue to hold Governments accountable not only on their national commitments but also on regional and international obligations like the ones contained in ICPD PoA, MDGs, Maputo Plan of Action, Abuja Declaration and other regional and international financing and policy frameworks.

Furthermore, as PPD is a southern-led, southern-run, south-south inter-governmental organization, we are very much looking forward to you sharing information, experiences and good practices. The idea here is to encourage transfer of best practices as well as their replication, where appropriate.

As we approach the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, we recognise that there has been some progress and successes. However, current trends suggest that many African countries will not reach the MDG targets for maternal health. This is why, like never before, the region needs strong leadership to make progress in these areas where we are lagging behind and are unlikely to achieve the MDG targets.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have two days and half to focus on these important development issues and to strengthen political commitment on the continent. I am hopeful 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 in our future advocacy work, networking and sharing of experiences. I am also hopeful that this meeting will further provide an opportunity to lay a strong foundation for long lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborative arrangements among countries and regional networks in addressing FP/RH, population and development issues.

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.

Before I conclude, I wish to recognise in a very special way our Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, the Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda. Madam Speaker, I thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to Reproductive Health and Family Planning both in this country and in the region. We, at PPD are very much looking forward to working with you as you host the up-coming important International Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting, March/April, 2012, whose theme is maternal health.

In a special way, I want to thank the US Ambassador to Uganda, H.E. Mr. Jerry P. Lanier, for the support that your country continues to give to the important area of Family Planning/Reproductive Health. US leadership in this field is very well known and remains important. We thank you for being here with us. I want to urge you and through you to the US Government to remain steadfast and on course in your support to RH/Family Planning.

I also wish to thank Mr. Harry Jooseery, the Executive Director, PPD. I thank you for coming all the way from Bangladesh and for your strong commitment to RH, FP, population and sustainable development.

Last but by no means least, I wish to recognise the financial support to this meeting from USAID through the Health Policy Project, UNFPA, CapacityPlus, Hewlett Foundation, Packard and Gates Foundations through Advance Family

Planning Project.

I wish you all a very productive and fruitful meeting and happy stay in Kampala.

I thank you.