



94-09-08: Statement of Sierra Leone, H.E. Mr. Bassie G. Bangura

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AS WRITTEN

SIERRA LEONE STATEMENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL
 CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT, CAIRO,
 1994 BY MR. BASSIE G. BANGURA, UNDER SECRETARY OF
 STATE, DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC
 PLANNING.

Mr. Chairman,
 Distinguished Heads of States and Ministers,
 Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I bring warm felicitations from my Head of State and Chairman of the
 National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), His Excellency Captain
 Valentine E. M. Strasser and the friendly people of Sierra Leone. May I
 take the opportunity to express thanks and appreciation to the
 Government of Egypt for hosting this conference and the organizers of

ICPD .94 for the wonderful preparatory work for this conference.

2. I also on behalf of our Government, express profound gratitude to the Government and People of Egypt for the warm hospitality extended to us and the excellent arrangements made for this conference.

3. Mr. Chairman, this meeting is timely because of increased international concerns for and emerging consensus on the current major issues on population and development. I wish to inform this august body that because of our Government's commitment to population and development issues not only in Sierra Leone but the world at large, Our country has participated in and implemented recommendations from the World Population Conferences since the Bucharest, conference held in 1974. Our delegation's desire to participate in finalizing the Programme of Action on Population and Development is unaifested by our presence here in Cairo.

4. Immense efforts have been made by my Government to implement recommendations of the 1974 World Plan of Action and the 1984 Kilimanjaro Programme of Action and now the 1992 Dakar/Ngor Declaration. Since the 1984 Mexico Conference, the Government has formulated and adopted a National Population Policy for Development, Progress and Welfare in 1988 and in 1989 respectively. In 1990, it endorsed the goals of the World Summit for Children. A Plan of Action for population was also formulated in 1991 and implementation started in 1992. A Policy and Plan of Action for Health complementing the Population Plan of Action and emphasizing among ,other things Safe Motherhood Reproductive Health especially for girls and martial adolescents and family planning have been adopted by our Government.

5. The government continues to view demographic trends the country is experiencing such as high population growth, infant and child mortality, maternal mortality and morbidity and rural urban migration rates as unsatisfactory in relation to socio-economic development. Some of the social issues are being addressed in our new educational system which among other things seeks to provide our youth especially girls, with more opportunities for sound and quality education. On the economic front the repayment of our country's huge external debt as well as the implementation of structural adjustment programmes have extremely curtailed the capacity of my government to moderate demographic trends and to provide much needed social services.

6. Therefore reducing infant and maternal mortality increasing access to primary education closing the gender gap and providing family planning services are goals that have been adopted at the World Summit for Children and are part of the plan of action under discussion at this conference. I want to reaffirm our government's commitment to tackle these issues and to fully endorse the ICPD Programme of Action.

7. We fully endorse the emphasis in the plan of action pertaining to population distribution and redistribution. This is because my government is under immense pressure in coping with problems emanating in the rebel war in Liberia which has spilled over into Sierra Leone. The number of displaced persons as a result of this war was estimated as 372 thousand in September 1993. In addition there are about 176 thousand and 117 thousand Sierra Leonean refugees in neighboring Guinea and Liberia respectively. The hosting of Liberian refugees and displaced persons has resulted in excessive pressure on the country's social and economic infrastructure and services especially in our towns. As well the rebel incursion into my country has considerably interrupted economic activity in large sections of the country.

8. Since the National Provisional Ruling Council came to power in April 1992, our government has demonstrated a strong political will and positive commitment towards population activities. Thus the 1985 population and housing census results were adopted by the government in May 1992. In December 1992 the National Family Planning Programme was established. Government officially published the National Population Policy Document in the Sierra Leone Gazette as a Government Notice no. 82. of April 1992.

The implementation of a national information education and communication programme has been approved by our government in 1994. In addition government has met its financial obligation to the UNFPA Global Funds.

9. Following the adoption of the National Population Policy a number of strategies have been formulated to consider the integration of population into sectors such as health, education, housing, environment, women and youth.

10. Apart from the policies mentioned above a number of institutions have been set up to address population related issues. Thus, a separate Department of Youth, Sports and Social Mobilization have been established to look after the problems of youth and adolescents. In 1992, the National Youth and Social Mobilization Secretariat was also established to promote activities pertaining to youth. As well, the government has set up the National Rehabilitation committee and office to coordinate emergency relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction programmes and activities of various agencies in the war affected areas. Programmes have been formulated by sectoral departments to address the rehabilitation and reconstruction requirements in agriculture, education, health, water and sanitation, housing and human settlement.

Government is seeking international assistance in the implementation of this Programme. However, our efforts are thwarted by the rebel war which has not only stifled our national economy but has also uprooted substantial percentage of our population.

11. Policies, plans and projects have been formulated and are being implemented to enhance the condition and status of the Sierra Leonean woman. A major step to promote the integration of women in the development process occurred in 1988 when the Women's Bureau, the official body responsible for the coordination, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of programmes for women was formed. A Gender desk has been set up at the office of the Head of State to review women's activities covering the Decade for Women, and to prepare for the African regional Conference in Dakar in November, 1994 and the Beijing Conference in 1995. Non-Governmental organization such as the Sierra Leone Women Development Movement Organization and Young Women Christian Association and other NGOs are implementing projects and programmes to enhance the status of women, whose economic, social and political empowerment our government considers crucial in the socio-economic and cultural development of our country.

12. Government is developing the National Environmental Action Plan with financial assistance from the World Bank. The action plan provides the framework for the integration of development ,population and environmental factors in order to promote environmentally sound sustainable development. The action plan also contains proposed projects on such topics as population and urbanization, gender issues and development and environmental management.

13. I now turn my attention to the very important issue of Sierra Leone's and other African countries financial requirement for the

implementation of ICPD. 1994 in the framework of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration. My Government thinks that the provision envisaged in the Programme of action is inadequate considering our substantial requirements in the areas of population and sustainable development. While my government will do everything possible to mobilize domestic resources for these activities I would like to appeal to the international donor community to generously supplement our meager resources. In this connection I would like to take this opportunity to thank our many donors and benefactors, in particular, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, The World Bank, USAID, Pathfinder Fund and IPPF who in various ways throughout the years have helped to build our institutional capacity for population programming. Furthermore the government is committed to increasing its allocation of resources for population and social programmes in the coming years. I strongly believe that if our donors can similarly contribute more financial resources to the social sector priorities Sierra Leone and other African countries would be in a position to implement the Programme of action for ICPD. 94.

14. To conclude, Mr. Chairman, I would like to appeal to countries represented here, especially those from Africa, to take seriously the implementation of ICPD. 94 in order to march words with action. In this connection, my government would provide full backing and cooperation to activities to assess and monitor such implementations like those proposed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

15. I thank You.