



Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. MOSES M. DLAMINI
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AT THE TWENTY FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE REVIEW
AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**30 JUNE 1999
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Mr. President
Secretary-General
Honourable Ministers
Distinguished Delegates

It is a great pleasure and an honour for me, and my delegation to present this statement on behalf of the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Mr. President,

The twenty-first special session of the General Assembly provides us with another opportunity to review the population and development situations in our respective countries, and to further seek collective approaches in an effort to strengthen our expressed commitments adopted at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. In our view, the initial review of the ICPD is timely in that, despite the commitments and efforts, as well as programmes that have been engaged, both at the national and international levels, our countries continue to face serious difficulties as a result of a wide range of negative factors. As such, there continues to be a need to bring about a balance between population growth and the capacity of our countries to provide for at least, the basic needs for all our people, and ensuring that people of all age groups are included from children to youth, and to the older persons in order to enhance our efforts at achieving our ultimate goal of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

For the Kingdom of Swaziland, the rate of population increase, given the fixed **supply** of land and limited resources, is one of the most serious threats to the future of the Swazi people. According to the 1997 population census, the population growth rate was calculated at 2.8%. Whilst this figure represents a reduction from the previous growth rate of **3.2%**, our economic performance still does not match that of the population growth. Evidently, this situation should not be allowed to continue if sustainable development is to be realized. It is for this reason that the Kingdom of Swaziland is in the process of developing a National Population Policy and a Comprehensive Reproductive Health Programme with the participation of representatives of religious leaders, traditional and community leaders, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, youth and other special groups as well as experts, policy makers and planners. This is subsequent to the official launching of the National Population Council in 1998, which has since produced a national agenda.

We strongly believe that the integration of population concerns into development, environment and poverty reduction strategies and resource allocation, at all levels, with the objective of meeting the needs and improving the **quality** of life of current and future generations will promote social justice and eradicate poverty. It is however, regrettable that to a large extent, the progress made in these areas in most developing countries remains modest. The reason for this status quo, is largely due to limitations in financial capacity rather than the lack of political will.

This situation emphasizes the importance for international cooperation and the support for the developmental process of these countries particularly in Africa.

Mr. President,

The delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report to this special session of the General Assembly contained in document (E/CN.9/1999/PC/4) which provides an overview of the constraints encountered thus far in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and provides useful recommendations for further action.

Furthermore, we value the important preparatory processes at the United Nations towards this special session as well as the regional preparatory meetings and the experience of the International Forum for the Operational Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD which was held in The Hague, the Netherlands in February, 1999. The issues discussed, such as on reproductive health; reproductive rights and implementation of reproductive health programmes; and women's empowerment, are viewed by my delegation as pertinent if we should register our success.

At the sub-regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) also held a meeting from 11-14 May, 1999 in Lusaka, Zambia to further harness and emphasise our collective concerns and strategies towards the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

The ICPD Programme of Action stresses that all countries should ensure that reproductive health services accessible to all individuals through the primary health care system, by the year 2015. This is a realistic goal that Governments should meet, ensuring that family-planning facilities and means of contraception are provided.

At the national level, the Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights Programme has been reviewed by the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland to be in line with the ICPD Platform of Action, thus offering comprehensive and integrated services. Reproductive health services are participatory and pragmatic and public health based.

This Programme also seeks to address the new challenges posed by sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS in particular, which will significantly undermine the improvements recorded in the past. It is regrettable that the Kingdom of Swaziland should be categorised as one of the countries with a high-incidence of HIV/AIDS. To this end, His Majesty the King has declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster, thus warranting an allocation of additional resources for fighting the disease. In view of the financial limitations we are faced with, the pace of response is slow though the situation obviously requires an urgent response. We continue to appeal for support. We are encouraged by the recent visit of the United Nations Aids Programme (UNAIDS)

Executive Director, Dr. Peter Piot to the Kingdom, who met with the Chairpersons of the Cabinet Committee on HIV/AIDS and the Crisis, Management and Technical Committee on HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

Within the context of overall hardship, the Kingdom of Swaziland has not been an exception in the quest for advancing the status of women and girls who have been consistently marginalized. Gender issues are lately being progressively integrated into the process of development planning, bearing in mind the promotion of their economic, social, and reproductive rights,

I must point out that the six priority areas for Swaziland which were identified include the Feminization of Poverty; Reproductive Health; Education; Women's Rights; Women in Power and Decision Making; and Culture, Family and Socialization as well as the Girl-Child. The Education sector has made major achievements in raising awareness and thus addressing the problem of gender stereotypes and negative attitudes.

Mr. President,

Whilst the Kingdom of Swaziland has recorded some achievements five years after the Cairo Conference, we are still faced with a lot of challenges. The formulation of the National Population Policy by May 2000 will usher in the real task of implementation along with the implementation of other programmes, such as the Poverty Alleviation Strategy, and addressing the HIV/AIDS problem and its consequent negative socio-economic impact, such as the increasing number of orphans, and female and children-headed household.

These and many other issues are urgent and require financial support. Inadequate financial and human resources to implement these programmes particularly, in the immediate areas of advocacy, awareness creation, service provision, and shortage of commodities pose very severe constraints. The other constraints are a consequence of lack of resources, such as, lack of reliable, adequate, timely data in support of the programmes.

It is for this reason, Mr. **President**, that the Government and People of the Kingdom of Swaziland value the assistance rendered by United Nations agencies in particular UNFPA in advocating for, assisting and financing, to an extent, the **implementation** of the Cairo Platform for Action. We are also grateful for the support from donor countries for their invaluable contribution and further appeal for their continued assistance.

I thank you Mr. President.