



# **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT**

## **ON POPULATION RELATED ISSUES**

**BY**

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## BACKGROUND

1. **Rt. Hon. Speaker**, every year, the international community observes the World Population Day on July 11th. In Uganda, this year's celebrations were held in Omoro District in Northern Uganda. The theme for this year's World Population Day commemoration was **"Leaving Nobody Behind: Improving Service Delivery and Accountability"**.
2. Looking back in our history, Uganda over time has put population issues at the centre of its development plans and programmes. Government of Uganda promulgated the first National Population Policy in 1995. That Policy highlighted the then rampant poverty levels in the country. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the population was living below the poverty line. The Policy stressed the importance of integrating population factors into the implementation of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) at national and lower levels.
3. After thirteen (13) years of implementation, the National Population Policy was revised in 2008. The revised Policy recognized the need to tackle the persistent high fertility (births) and high mortality (deaths) in the country.

4. In this regard, Uganda increased its spending and emphasis on preventive rather than curative programmes. Priority was placed on programmes such as immunization against childhood killer diseases, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, water & sanitation as well as household hygiene. In addition, and in order to address high fertility challenges, reproductive health and family planning were emphasized. These programmes were augmented by the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE).

## **RELEVANCE OF THE THEME TO UGANDA'S DEVELOPMENT**

5. The theme for the 2018 World Population Day commemoration, which was '***Leaving Nobody Behind. Improving Service Delivery and Accountability***' embodies the ideals of our Government. It reminds us of the importance of inclusive growth as we work towards achieving *Uganda's Vision 2040* and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and is also a call upon all of us, as leaders to commit to ensuring that responsive programmes are put in place.

## **PROGRESS IN POPULATION HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

6. As a result of these programmes, Uganda has made commendable progress in a number of population and health related areas. This progress is reflected in the various Censuses and Uganda Demographic and Health Surveys. Let me cite some examples.
7. Uganda has registered an impressive increase in longevity of its population. Life expectancy in Uganda increased from 43 years in 1991 to 63 years in 2016 (UBoS).
8. HIV / AIDS prevalence rate in the general population declined from 18.5% (and 30% in some specific sub-populations) in 1991 to 6.4% in 2016.
9. Uganda has also seen an improvement in its immunization programmes. Immunization against DPT<sub>3</sub> currently stands at 79% although full immunization (children immunized against all the killer diseases) stands at 55%. This has led to improvements in child survival. Infant mortality (children dying in the first year of life) dropped from 122 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 43 deaths in 2016, representing a 63 percent drop.

10. Maternal mortality also declined from 506 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 336 in 2016, representing a decline of 34 per cent. Fertility has also declined from 7.4 children per woman in 1988 to 5.4 in 2016, a decline of 24 per cent.
11. In the education sector, Uganda has, since 1997, seen tremendous increase in the enrolment of our children under Universal Primary Education (UPE). In 1997, we had 3 million children enrolled under UPE. This increased to 8.7 million by 2016. In addition, we have also achieved parity in terms of boys and girls enrolling for UPE. As a result, literacy rate in Uganda increased from 54% in 1991 to 75%, currently.
12. Poverty in Uganda has also reduced. It stood at 56 % in 1991. This means that in 1991, for every two Ugandans, one was living below the poverty line. The good news is that poverty levels have declined to 21% by 2016.
13. The increased child survival, coupled with high fertility and increased life expectancy, have led to a surge in total population. At a population growth rate of 3.0% per annum, Uganda's population grew from 16.7 million people in 1990 to 34.6 million in 2014. Uganda's population is expected to reach 40 million by the end of this year. The majority of this population is

predominantly made up of young people. I need to add that 78% of our population is below thirty (30) years of age.

14. This surge in the population presents the country with both challenges and opportunities. Uganda's **Vision 2040** recognizes that this young population is an important resource that should be invested in to harness the Demographic Dividend and attain socio-economic transformation. The *Demographic Dividend* is the economic benefit that can arise out of a country's taking advantage of the changing population structure and adopting clear, focused and sustained policies that empower a country's working population (15-64 years) to become the engine of economic growth.

#### **POPULATION RELATED CHALLENGES, ACTIONS NEEDED AND APPEAL**

15. **Rt. Hon. Speaker**, in spite of this progress and prospects, we still face population related challenges. Let me mention a few examples.

16. Our children still die from preventable diseases as well as those diseases that can be prevented through immunization and better hygiene like hand washing with water and soap after visiting the toilet. As leaders, we need to support policies and initiatives aimed at developing and utilizing water, hygiene and sanitation facilities.

17. Teenage pregnancies in Uganda have remained a major problem. The teenage pregnancy rate has stagnated at 25% for the last 10 years. This means that in Uganda, one (1) out of every four (4) teenage girls is either pregnant or has had a baby before they reach 19 years old. This is a matter of national concern. We call upon parents, teachers, health workers, cultural and religious leaders as well as community leaders to fulfill their callings and role in addressing this problem.
18. Rt. Hon. Speaker, when we went to Omoro district during the commemoration of the 2018 World Population Day, we found similar population related challenges in the district. For example, teenage pregnancy rate stands at 28%, which is higher than the national average.
19. In Omoro district, crop production is the major economic activity, employing 95% of the population in subsistence agriculture (according to the 2014 Population and Housing Census). This has implications for poverty.
20. In addition, latrine coverage in Omoro is low at 39% and access to safe water is at 53%. The poor health conditions are mainly due to a high disease burden in the district due to malaria which is rampant and stands at 41%.

## CONCLUSION

21. **Rt. Hon. Speaker and Colleagues, in conclusion, I would like to state that:**

- (i) Uganda joined the rest of the World to observe the World Population Day on July 11, 2018 in Omoro district, Northern Uganda.
- (ii) The theme of this year's World Population Day was **"Leaving Nobody Behind: Improving Service Delivery and Accountability"**.
- (iii) We are grateful to the large contingent of Hon. Members of Parliament who joined the Chief Guest and the people of Omoro district, for these celebrations.
- (iv) Uganda has made some progress in areas of poverty reduction, life expectancy, child survival, literacy, HIV/AIDS prevention. However, Uganda still faces challenges like high teenage pregnancy rate, inadequate access to full immunisation of preventable diseases as well as inadequate household hygiene, nutrition, water & sanitation. In addition, Uganda needs to pay more attention to lifestyle diseases (Non-Communicable Diseases) like diabetes, cancers, diabetes, heart diseases including hypertension. Government will continue strengthening awareness creation, community mobilisation and programs that address the above issues.