

Joint Statement at the UN General Assembly Meeting to mark the 30th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development – Delivered by the Honorable Princess Kasune, Minister for Central Province of Zambia

Mr. President,

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of the 80 governments of Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, and my own country of Zambia.

It was in Cairo that we recognized that population is about people, instead of numbers. At the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, 179 countries adopted a forward-looking Programme of Action, promising a profound impact on the lives of women and girls. Today, it is more relevant than ever.

Thirty years ago, we established a worldwide consensus on the vital links between population and sustainable development, and the centrality of prioritizing sexual and reproductive health and the right of women and girls to make their own choices regarding their health and their lives.

The ICPD's Programme of Action (PoA), steered countries towards inclusive and equitable policies that advanced health and gender equality, and we have a lot to celebrate. Between 2000 and 2020, the maternal mortality ratio dropped by about 34% worldwide. More newborns survive the first fragile months of life; and the rate of girls marrying before age 18 decreased from 25% to 19%. The global proportion of women's family planning needs being met through modern methods increased to 77.6%. We have seen greater investments in adolescent health. More girls are finishing primary education, entering secondary education, and accessing evidence-based information to make informed decisions about their health and rights. We can be proud of the steps that have been taken collectively.

Despite progress, sharp disparities remain, posing complex challenges to women's and girls' wellbeing. Multiple crises and conflict situations, including COVID-19, have exacerbated issues such as growing inequality; disruptions in access to medicines and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services; alarming rates of sexual and gender-based violence; stagnating maternal mortality in some parts of the world since 2020; and harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation are persistent in many parts of the world.

The 30th anniversary of ICPD is an important moment to not only recognize our achievements, but to take stock of the substantial work there is left to do. Sustainable development requires ongoing commitment to realizing rights and choices. This contributes to inclusive economic growth, poverty and hunger eradication, education, reduced inequalities, meeting the needs of

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older populations, and environmental sustainability. The enduring relevance of ICPD demands actions and investments that will accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Pact for the Future, and a post-2030 agenda that continues to center the ICPD PoA.

The ICPD PoA offers us tools and principles to confront contemporary and emerging challenges, such as climate change, changes in demographic patterns, water scarcity, and increased urbanization. We celebrate the continued consensus on ICPD and we must continue to work together as a global community – across all regions – to strengthen our partnerships and joint actions to tackle these global challenges together, with human rights at the very core.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to ICPD and its principles.

We call on everyone – Member States, the UN system, civil society, private sector, young people – to unite around a renewed dedication to accelerating the implementation of the Programme of Action and ensuring no one is left behind on our journey towards a peaceful, equitable, just, and sustainable future for all.

Thank you, Mr. President.