

**President Joaquim Chissano,
Co-Chair, High-Level Task Force for the ICPD and former President of Mozambique**

Thursday, October 3 – 14.00 – 15.30 hrs.

Open remarks for Session 2:

Review of Progress towards the ICPD Programme of Action and the Agenda Beyond 2014

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Co-Chair of the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD, I am pleased to have this opportunity to join you as we review Africa's progress and chart its future on the ICPD.

We can be proud of the strides we've made. But we know what needs to be done to ensure a more prosperous tomorrow – one where all of our people enjoy their rights, dignity and health, without leaving anyone behind.

This morning the High-Level Task Force held a press conference where we presented our policy recommendations for the ICPD Beyond 2014. I am certain that these recommendations reflect priorities and concerns we all deeply share: accelerating our efforts to achieve the ICPD goals, including ending Africa's alarming rates of maternal mortality, adolescent pregnancy and HIV.

By the end of today, in our region, 450 women and adolescent girls will have died from pregnancy-related causes and over 2,000 young people will acquire HIV.

Our recommendations centre on core aspects of the unfinished ICPD agenda: accelerating the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and young people, and the fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

These are keys for propelling Africa's transformation toward inclusive economic growth and sustainable development, and meeting our greatest development challenges – reducing poverty, improving health and education, seizing demographic windows of opportunity, managing migration, urbanization and climate change, and improving nutrition and food security.

Allow me to highlight some of the Task Force recommendations especially relevant for our discussion today:

- **Accelerating universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health information, education and services.**

In Africa and elsewhere, the consequences of unfulfilled sexual and reproductive health and rights fall disproportionately to women and adolescent girls, especially those living in poverty or otherwise marginalized. This is not only a human rights and public health issue, it's a matter of social justice and equity.

That means services must be made free or affordable, including for adolescent and youth, as basic and essential health services for human well-being. And they must be made available in rural and remote areas –the communities that have been most 'left behind'.

- **Guaranteeing universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, both in and out of school.**

Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education are keys to empowering Africa's 300 million young people. This can help them prevent pregnancy, stay HIV-free, prevent abuse and gender-based violence, and acquire values of human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination.

They are also an essential part of the investment package Africa needs to make in our young people if we are to harness the benefits of the demographic dividend, along with decent work opportunities that can in turn help reverse the brain drain from their migration.

- **Eliminating violence against women and girls and securing universal access to critical services for all victims and survivors of gender-based violence.**

It is high time we end impunity for perpetrators. And we must ensure, at a minimum, that every woman and girl survivor of these human rights violations, every boy and man sexually abused, has immediate access to health and social services, safety and justice.

We must do more on prevention, to put a stop to violence against women and girls in the first place, and engage men and boys from all walks of life. And this includes ending early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation, within a generation, and protecting girls from all harmful practices.

- **Enacting legal and policy reforms that respect, protect and fulfill sexual and reproductive rights for all. Among the reforms most needed:**

We must repeal legal barriers that block women and young people from getting the sexual and reproductive information and services they need, including parental or spousal consent requirements, restrictions on access to contraception, and laws that restrict access to safe abortion.

Unsafe abortion takes the lives of 27 thousand women and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa every year – more than in any other region. It also costs our families, health systems and public budgets nearly one billion dollars annually.

Let's be honest: where abortion is illegal, it is the poorest women and adolescent girls who are forced to risk their lives. Those with the means will find a way to get a safe procedure. That's what makes this an issue of grave social injustice, and we must put a stop to the needless deaths of women and girls.

I'll close by emphasizing that *sexual and reproductive rights belong to everyone*. For meaningful, equitable development, all must be free to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives - without any form of discrimination, coercion or violence, regardless of who they are-- including because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Too many of our brothers and sisters here in Africa face horrific acts of violence and discrimination on this basis. That is not the Africa we want. The Task Force calls for an end to discrimination and for equality under the law for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

As the MDG framework comes to term in 2015 the UN System together with the world community initiated in early 2012 a thorough MDG review at the global, regional and national level through extensive thematic and country consultations and involving a range of global, regional and national constituencies.

At the same time, the UN General Assembly took a decision two years ago to extend the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014 and ensure its follow up in order to fully meet its goals and objectives. It also commissioned an operational review of the implementation of the Programme of Action "taking into account the need for a systematic, comprehensive and integrated approach to population and development issues".

The ICPD Beyond 2014 Operational Review consists of several interrelated activities including a global survey and a number of thematic global and regional conferences, such as the Global Youth Forum in Bali in December 2012 and the Human Rights Meeting in June 2013.

The purpose of this session is to highlight the timeliness of the ICPD Operational Review and draw on the strategic and policy interlinkages between population and development issues for further integrating them in the post 2015 development priorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen: This week it's time to not only commit to achieving, but to *go beyond* our Cairo promises. And we can't stop there. The next step is to make sure sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and young people are front and center of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

These are matters of fundamental human rights and human dignity. But it's not just the right thing to do, it's strategic for Africa's future. These are not optional issues for our policy-making. They are essential.