



**STATEMENT BY  
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**TO THE FORTIETH (40<sup>th</sup>) SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT: THE CHANGING AGE STRUCTURES OF  
POPULATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR  
DEVELOPMENT.**

**NEW YORK  
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## **Chairperson and distinguished delegates,**

Allow me to join others in congratulating you and the Bureau on your election as chair of the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development. South Africa remains committed to the work of the Commission. South Africa supports the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Pakistan on behalf of the G77 and China. It is an honour for me to present the South African statement to this meeting.

South Africa has just entered its second decade of democracy and next year the country will be celebrating 10 years of the implementation of our Population Policy. South Africa as chair of the African Population Commission bureau hosted a conference on “Population and Development in Africa - Research and Policy Dialogue for Action” which culminated in the Mafikeng Declaration (2007). South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development (1992), the ICPD PoA (1994), the United Nations Millennium Declaration and its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000), the Madrid PoA on Ageing (2002), the Ministerial Declaration of the ICPD at Ten Africa Regional Review (2004), the resolutions of the Southern African Ministers’ Conference on Population and Development (2004) and the Mafikeng Declaration (2007).

Chairperson, in South Africa, children constitute just over one-third (39%) of the country’s population. In 2005, there were over 18 million children in the country, and the majority of these children are between six and twelve years. In the same year, there were approximately 3.4 million orphans, and this can be largely attributed to the loss of parents due the HIV&AIDS pandemic. It is envisaged that the number of children living in child-headed households will also increase. It is important to note that South Africa has been experiencing a decline of total fertility rate since the 1950s when it was 6.1 live births per woman. The current rate is 2.5 live births per woman.

In response to these challenges affecting children, the South African government, private sector and civil society have played a significant role in the care of vulnerable children. The government adopted a **national integrated plan for children and youth infected and affected by HIV&AIDS** to address some of the abovementioned challenges. The government is also committed to finalizing an **improved national comprehensive strategy against AIDS and sexually transmitted infections**. The support offered to these children includes material support (i.e. social grants, food parcels, school fees, orphan registers, psychological support, food gardens and income generating activities), home and community-based care. The government has recently established the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to ensure the effective and efficient grant administration for the benefit of children and other vulnerable groups. Over eight million children now have access to social assistance.

Chairperson, globally, **there are more young people now than ever before, particularly in developing countries**. In demographic terms South Africa has a young population with 31.9% younger than 15 years and 20.5% aged 15-24. This means that 52.4% or approximately one in every two South Africans is younger than 25 years and one in every five is a youth aged 15-24. The number of young people increased from 6.4m in 1985 to 9.7m in 2005. Youth comprise the largest proportion of the unemployed, and women and rural youth are worse affected than others. A key point to note regarding the job market is that while many unskilled youth and women are unemployed, there is a shortage of suitably skilled workers in general.

The South African government is engaging in various activities to address the challenges facing youth. The **Joint Initiative on Skills Acquisition (JIPSA)**, which brings together government, business, labour, training institutes and others is another initiative aimed at developing skills, especially focusing on youth. The number of youth that have passed standard 8 and standard 12, and completed

tertiary education continues to increase. The new **Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA)** has been designed to address the challenge of unemployment, especially youth unemployment. In general the government has created policies and programmes for the integration of youth into society, and ensuring that their needs are addressed adequately.

As indicated above, South Africa is a youthful country. However, it is important to note that the country has also been experiencing an increase of people older than sixty years, despite the impacts of HIV&AIDS. The 2001 census recorded 7.3% of the population as older than sixty years. South Africa's older population was higher than majority of the African countries. There are projections that this cohort will double in approximately forty years and its majority to remain women. The increase of HIV&AIDS has placed a tremendous responsibility of care (breadwinners and care givers) for the sick and orphans to this cohort.

Chairperson, the South African government has noticed the increase of ageing and it has responded by creating relevant policies and programmes. **The provision of health care services, especially primary health care to the aged is being done for free in both rural and urban areas. The government has also responded to the challenges facing the aged by providing and supporting residential institutional care, registration of services provision, community based services and social grants. More than 2,1 million elderly people receive the old age grant.** The overall expenditure on social security (i.e. old age grant, child support grant, disability grant, foster care grant and the others) increased from R36,9 billion in 2003/2004, that was 2,9 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to a projected R73 billion in 2009/2010, constituting 3,1 percent of GDP. **The indigence policy, forum for older persons and the Older Persons Act of 2006, are some of the government interventions aimed at promoting a better life for the aged.**

This statement will not be complete if we do not mention gender issues, specifically looking at women. Women constitute 52% of the South African population, and a significant percentage (40%) of households is female headed. Women remain overly represented among the poor, and up to 60% of the poor in South Africa are women. The latter constitute a priority group in all programmes and projects aimed at addressing poverty in South Africa. The South African government is accelerating the implementation of all its programmes and mechanisms for people living in abject poverty prioritizing the de-feminisation of poverty, i.e. the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Programme, Skills Development and other programmes. The mainstreaming of gender into all poverty alleviation programmes is given impetus in line with the government plan, focusing on improving access to income, human capital development through education, health, water, sanitation and electrification and also improving access to assets in the form of housing and land.

Chairperson, the changing challenges on population and development of the different age structures in South Africa are overwhelming. However, **the government has continuously assessed the demographic trends and responded accordingly through effective policies, projects and programmes.** The government will continue to address the challenges holistically to ensure sustainable human development.

We trust that this meeting will be successful in catalyzing practical and effective future initiatives which will enable us to address the different challenges on population and development in relation to the changing population age structures that we are experiencing.

Thank you!