



STATEMENT
BY NIYI OJUOLAPE, UNFPA REPRESENTATIVE
AT THE
LAUNCH OF THE 2018 STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT
AND OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NATIONAL FBO CONFERENCE
ON CSE
AT
M-PLAZA HOTEL, ROMAN RIDGE, ACCRA
MONDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2018

Protocol:

- Honourable Minister of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs
- H.E. High Commissioner of Canada to Ghana
- Heads of UN Agencies
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Development Partners
- Representatives of the NGO/CSO/FBO Community
- Representatives of Traditional and Religious Bodies
- Distinguished Invited Guests
- Our Distinguished Young People, especially Our Girls
- The Media, Our Partners in Development
- Ladies and Gentlemen



My message this morning will be two-fold; however, they are both inextricably linked to the achievement of the overall goals of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Zero Preventable Maternal Deaths, Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning and Zero Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices.

FBO Conference

Let me first focus on the events and issues leading to the hosting of this Faith-Based Organizations Conference which will be followed by information on the State of World Population report that will be launched in Ghana today.

Ten years ago in 2008, UNFPA at the global level organized a forum of Faith-Based Organizations on Population and Development in Istanbul, Turkey, for more than 160 Faith-Based representatives from every region in the world. The main purpose was to celebrate faith-based partnerships, launch the Inter-Faith Network on Population and Development, and commit to future joint collaborations. The forum emphasized the power of Faith-Based Organizations to effect change in local communities and sought ways to promote reproductive health and rights, gender equality, and population and development issues.

Panel discussions centred on violence against women, women and girls' empowerment, family planning, HIV/AIDS, and youth and migration. At the forum, there were 16 religious leaders and 10 representatives of



international FBOs, working together with regional faith-based leaders. The forum created a series of recommendations to enhance partnerships that would reinforce UNFPA's mandate "*to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.*" I believe that FBOs from Ghana also participated in this forum, possibly some of you present here today and you have since brought the knowledge and best practices to bear in the Ghanaian context as part of the necessary follow up actions.

Five years ago, UNFPA in collaboration with the Africa Union, initiated action to address the need for the continent of Africa to consciously invest in its human resources especially, the youth which is its largest asset. Assessment of Africa's prospects for economic growth, by the late Executive Director, Professor Osotimehin highlighted the importance of this.

Today, as we begin this national conference in Accra/Ghana, an International Conference on Family Planning is underway in Kigali, Rwanda, for the past two hours now. Under the theme "Investing for a Lifetime of Returns", the Conference is addressing issues of the various returns on investment that family planning provides, from education and empowerment to economic growth and environmental health. Underlying many of the conference sessions will be a focus on the ways in which countries can harness the benefits of the Demographic Dividend to reap these returns on the macro and micro levels.



The *Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalie Kanem* opened the conference in Kigali, Rwanda this morning.

As we are aware, population issues in all forms that directly and indirectly affect the quality of life of the individual and family is a core business of UNFPA. I can assure you that within the last three years, these have also become central to African countries. With support from the West and Central African Regional Office of UNFPA, 23 countries have trained personnel from key ministries and institutions in national transfer accounts methodology which is an effective methodology that enables countries to pursue the right investments to harness the demographic dividend. These countries, including Ghana, have produced *country profile reports* as the main tools for ensuring the right investments at the right time and for the right persons as it deals with inter-generational transfers of national income.

Honourable Minister

The world means business and yes, Africa means real business for the following reason. It has been proven without exception that countries that pursued strategies providing the opportunities to their adolescent populations when they were at this stage of their demographic transitions were able to lift their economies out of poverty.

SWOP 2018

With regards to the state of world population report, I will make only a few observations as the main highlights will be presented by the experts from



academia. The State of World Population Report, is UNFPA’s flagship report on population and development. Over the years we have had topics including the following:

1. *The Power of Choice:*

Reproductive Rights and the Demographic Transition 2018

2. *Worlds Apart:*

Reproductive Health and Rights in an Age of Inequality 2017

3. *10: How Our Future depends on a Girl at this Decisive Age* 2016

4. *Shelter from the Storm: Transformative Agenda for Women and Girls in a Crisis-Prone World* 2015

5. *The Power of 1.8 billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future* 2014

6. *Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the Challenge of Adolescent Pregnancy* 2013

We can observe that these are varied topics including those for want of time, I have not mentioned they need our study and consideration of the insights, recommendations and best practices. I will encourage you to seek them out for references.

From this year's report, there are some basic facts that I suggest we all take into consideration in our thinking, policies, and programmes:

- ✓ "Family size is closely linked with reproductive rights, which in turn, are tied to many other rights, including the right to adequate health, education, and jobs. Where people can exercise their rights, they tend to thrive. Where these rights are stifled, people often fail to achieve their full potential, impeding economic and social progress," according to the new report."

- ✓ Fertility is generally higher among women with less education than among women with at least secondary education.

- ✓ Having too few children per country that is fertility below replacement level of 2.1 births per woman is also a problem.

- ✓ Family planning is consistent with reproductive rights that encompass social, economic, cultural and institutional circumstances and enablers that empower.

At the end of the three days, after you have internalized all the information, learn from the best practices, discussed harnessing the demographic dividend in Ghana, examining the benefits of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in improving the lives of young people, the causes, effects, implications and prevention of maternal morbidity in Ghana, you will come



to better understand your role as religious leaders: in preventing maternal deaths and adolescent pregnancy; ending obstetric fistula; increasing access to family planning; ending child marriage in Ghana; advocating for the prevention and management of sexual and gender based violence; implementing community based interventions relating to the dynamics between social norms and religious beliefs; being a voice of the voiceless; and development of action plans.

Before anyone even contemplates about a packed programme, I can assure you that every minute will be appreciated and enjoyed. There will be no room for tiredness, nor talk about boredom. The blend of persons, from religion, professions, gender, geographical spread, educational attainment, and ages will provide an excellent atmosphere for lively discussions and exchange of ideas. Syndicate work on various topics will add to the quality and depth of discussions, while the action plan development is sure to ensure a results-based conference. Practical and implementable action plans related to the core issues are expected and will be the basis for implementing what you will learn over the next three days.

I wish you a fruitful conference.

With this assurance, I thank you very much for your presence and attention.