

WELCOME REMARKS

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AT THE COLLABORATIVE DIALOGUE BY THE EPF AND APF
ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE, HEALTH FINANCING,
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
SWISS SPIRIT ALISA HOTEL, ACCRA, GHANA

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I am extremely happy to be part of this momentous occasion and to welcome you on behalf of European Parliamentary Forum (EPF), African Parliamentary Forum (APF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In this arrangement, I get to be the first to say: Obiaaa Akwaaba, meaning- everyone welcome. Note that this rendition of hitherto almost exclusively Ghanaian greeting is a specially registered version of the welcome hashtag for UNFPA Ghana.

More seriously, I note that just barely a little over a third of the year, Ghana is recording two major conferences. Both of these saw the importance to collaborate with UNFPA because of our worthy mandate. They were both organised by Economists, who are hard profit seeking experts and Parliamentarians, who are tough lawmakers, with the interest of the people at heart. UNFPA has used its comparative advantage, and seize the opportunities to make visible the Fund's interest and work. AfHEA, Africa Health Economics and Policy Association, a global CSO with roots in Ghana, held a conference on *securing primary health care for all: the foundation for making progress on universal health care in Africa*. UNFPA participation

was in an area relevant to the focus of this meeting and we will be sharing the key messages of the outcomes with you as the meeting progresses. Today, we are here as key participants of the collaborative dialogue on universal health coverage, health financing, population and development all three are very significant if we are to achieve the sustainable development goals.

It is important to note that the planning of a third conference is on its way, which will also pave the way for the Nairobi Summit in November. The China-Africa Conference on Population and Development which is being hosted by the Government of Ghana, and as such is being jointly organized by the National Population Council (NPC) of Ghana and the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), with support from the China Population and Development Research | Center (CPDRC) and the China Population Association (CPA). The theme for the conference is *'Population Data Management and Universal Access to Reproductive Health as Key Drivers of Sustainable Development.'*

Ladies and gentlemen, in 1969 the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA was born with a declaration that family planning is a basic human right under the administration of the United Nations Development Fund. UNFPA has therefore been in existence for the past 50 years (UNFPA@50). Twenty-five years after its establishment, a blue print which forms the basis of UNFPA's work: the International Conference on Population Programme of Action, ICPD PoA, came into existence. In fact, this is the key reason why we

are here today to discuss the POA and examine its value to the current global agenda. But it also provides an opportunity for UNFPA and its partners to celebrate global, regional and national achievements in the context of these two anniversaries.

UNFPA Ghana has decided to add a special spin to its celebration of the ICPD by creating an opportunity to focus on an important Ghanaian personality, I will tell who he is and why in a few minutes.

As you may all be aware, the ICPD PoA was developed in September 1994, in Cairo, Egypt. Representatives from 179 countries participated in discussions to finalize the PoA on population and development for implementation. The primary recommendations of ICPD PoA were the calls for (1) linking the provision of sexuality education to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services; (2) building awareness, acceptance and support for youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and services; (3) addressing gender inequity in terms of beliefs, attitudes and norms; and (4) targeting the early adolescent period (10-14 years).

When the ICPD was held in 1994 to draw up the visionary 20-year Programme of Action (which sought to improve the quality of life of every person; to ensure sustained economic growth and achieve sustainable development), among the many renowned delegates who made valuable inputs, was Ghana's Professor Fred Sai. This was the occasion where Prof Fred Sai played an excellent overarching leadership role of chairing the main

committee. Coincidentally, Prof Sai will be 95 years old in June 2019. UNFPA Ghana deems it necessary to join the family and the government of Ghana to celebrate this international icon and national legend, to spur all stakeholders in population and development to revamp the ICPD agenda in the country in order to accelerate the achievements of results.

In 2016, the immediate past Executive Director of UNFPA Professor Babatunde Osotimehin in his first and last visit to Ghana in 2016, tasked not only the government, civil society, ministries and private sector to ensure that the largest chunk of one of the most important expenditures in a country, on maternal and reproductive health, is not left to the vagaries of external funding, but also parliament in its oversight function of accountability on the executive, must ensure that this is not the case. He was addressing the Ghanaian parliament. Your recognition of the fact that *85% of the costs of meeting the SDG health targets are evidently achievable with domestic resources* bears testimony to his call. UNFPA therefore appreciates your choice of focus, and choice of country to emphasize this fundamental fact.

In conclusion, I will like to announce that the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Dr Natalia Kanem who assumed Office in October 2017, would for the first time pay a day's working visit to Ghana for the preliminary phase of the yearlong action packed celebrations in Ghana on UNFPA@50, ICPD25 and Fred Sai@95. I welcome you once again.

Obrigado.