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Formal session

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Statement by

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Mr. President, Excellences,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Building on the more detailed presentation at the informal session of the Executive Board on UNFPA Country Programme Documents and related matters held on 25 August, and in line with the guidance provided by the Bureau, it is my pleasure to present highlights of developments in the Eastern and Southern Africa region that have bearing that provide a level of context for your further consideration of the draft Country Programmes for Mozambique (2017-2020) and Eritrea (2017 -2021), as well as the country programme extensions for Malawi and Burundi.

**Agenda 2030 and SDGs implementation:**
In 2014, under the auspices of the African Union, the continent defined a long-term transformative agenda, known as Agenda 2063, *the Future we want for Africa*. Agenda 2063 articulates Africa’s new development pathway (and provided the basis for the Common Africa Position that became the key negotiation document for Africa member states during the Sustainable development intergovernmental process). A fundamental element of Agenda 2063, and therefore the common Africa position, is a recognition of the continent’s fast growing population size and its youthful profile, and an understanding that Africa’s future prosperity and development trajectory would depend on its ability to harness this youthful demographic edge.

The Africa regional review of ICPD and the resulting Addis Ababa Declaration on ICPD beyond 2014 was an important precursor and input into Agenda 2063 and has catalyzed a number of national demographic dividend analysis and studies that have been critical in new SDG localized/aligned national development and poverty reduction plans (Uganda, Zambia), and the AU theme and complementary Road Map for 2017 on the demographic dividend and investment in Africa’s youth.

**Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,**
Indeed, when one recognizes the fast pace of population growth in East and Southern Africa, 2.6 per cent per annum, with a present population size of about 460 million (457.8 million), that will double by 2050 and estimated to reach 1 billion by 2055, the 23 member states that make up this region, recognize that there best bet for reducing poverty, addressing persistent inequality, guaranteeing health and well-being, addressing environmental challenges and climate change, and promoting peace and security, lies in placing increased investments in their youthful human capital.

This holds true for Eritrea, Mozambique, Malawi and Burundi – each having between 60 and 70 percent of their populations below the age of 25 years and each having taken firm commitments within the context of localizing the SDGs and revising their respective national development plans, the priority needed on education, health and well-being, youth
employment and empowerment and addressing vulnerabilities and inequalities thereby leaving no one behind and especially their most critical asset, young people.

In this regard, commitments made to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and the empowerment and advancement of women and young people, as per the regional commitment for further actions of ICPD beyond 2014, represent for the region- a transformative agenda.

**Distinguished Members of the Executive Board**

In the region, social challenges of significance include high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity including Obstetric Fistula, high rates of teenage pregnancy and consequent school drop outs, high HIV prevalence rates, persistent gender inequalities including gender-based violence and traditional practices that are harmful including female genital mutilation and child marriage.

The current El-Nino weather system, has compounded ongoing humanitarian needs brought about by protracted geo-political crisis especially in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions. This has led to high levels of food insecurity, massive movement of population groups – both as refugees and internally displaced persons and increased levels of vulnerability especially among women, children and young people.

The region has seen a checkered economic outlook. While a few economies have graduated to middle income status and as a collective a region with projected GDP at around 4.6 percent in 2016, a significant majority including Mozambique and Eritrea, Malawi and Burundi are classified as low income economies. Under UNFPA’s business model the region has 16 red quadrant countries, 2 yellow, 2 orange and 2 pink.

As a result, UNFPA’s approach to cooperation in the region is for the most part around integrated and comprehensive support to advancing human rights based policies, strengthening institutions, developing capacities and building resilience. These are the strategies that will be used in the two country programmes under consideration.

In Mozambique, for example, UNFPA will support a series of robust interventions that will improve not only demand for sexual and reproductive health services, but also to promote access, through strengthening human resource capacities in health, empowering young people and women to demand reproductive health services, and supporting the country to strengthen the supply-chain management of commodities so that they are accessible by the most vulnerable members of the population.

Similarly in Eritrea, the UNFPA-supported programme will focus on ensuring that adolescents and youth have access to quality integrated sexual and reproductive health information and youth-friendly health services, that are gender-sensitive - through the establishment of youth friendly corners in health facilities. The programme will also focus on strengthening the capacity of educators to deliver lessons on comprehensive sexuality education.
UNFPA will also collaborate with communities and national institutions to support the elimination of harmful practices including gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and child marriages throughout the region. In Mozambique and Eritrea, partnerships with national and community-based institutions will continue to be prioritized, particularly since many of these practices are rooted in issues of gender inequality and rigid cultural norms that affect the status of women and girls. UNFPA will continue to support interventions that tackle male socialization, and programmes that engage with men around the issues of gender inequality.

In both cooperation frameworks for Mozambique and Eritrea, UNFPA will focus on strengthening national capacities for data collection, analysis and utilization, in order to ensure the availability of high quality data on key issues such as poverty reduction, inequality and the demographic dividend.

Furthermore, UNFPA has established strong partnerships with research institutions such as Africa Institute for Development Policy Research (AFIDEP), the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) and several academic institutions in order to support countries to generate evidence and policy options for their demographic dividend.

In the East and Southern Africa region, we have also sought to facilitate youth ownership and involvement in the Demographic dividend by collaborating with academic partners in implementing campus-based programmes of the 'Harnessing Demographic Dividend of Africa (HarDDA) Initiative/ in Universities in selected countries across the region (South Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia).

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

We know that humanitarian crises spells disaster for the sexual and reproductive health of women and young people, and we have seen the devastating effects in our region brought about by the El Nino phenomenon. UNFPA has been supporting country offices in emergency preparedness and response, and we have also been working closely with countries to strengthen their capacities for collecting data in emergencies in order to better target and address the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

The needs are staggering in this and other areas, and therefore, UNFPA collaborates with other humanitarian actors to organize care for survivors and prevent gender-based violence during emergencies.

Partnerships within the UN system are key in this regard, and extend not only to humanitarian issues, but also to broader health, education and development issues. As a result, UNFPA continues to partner with sister agencies, through joint programmes and implementation of the ‘Delivering as one model’ in a few countries, including Mozambique.

Distinguished delegates
Recognizing the importance of Agenda 2030, and the principle of ‘leaving no one behind,’ we have been advocating with countries and providing technical assistance to support the integration of the SDG’s into national development plans and processes. UNFPA has actively participated in the UNDAF/SDG processes at national levels and has undertaken leadership roles in UNCT core thematic groups, including those responsible for monitoring results towards the attainment of the SDG’s.

We recognize however, that in order to effectively address the development issues outlined—within a resource-constrained environment, we must employ innovative strategies, diversify our partnerships and strengthen resource mobilization strategies and efforts.

As such, in the East and Southern Africa region, we will continue to aim towards mobilizing adequate, consistent and predictable financial resources, securing and expanding our traditional and non-traditional funding base and actively seek to engage new partners in order to support countries in achieving their development goals.

*Mr President, Distinguished Members of the Board*

We would like to appreciate the Governments of Eritrea and Mozambique for providing leadership throughout the process of defining the umbrella GVT-UN system wide cooperation programme, from which the respective country programmes emanate and for the partnership that exists with national counterparts and development partners in each of the countries.

We trust that the country programmes will be approved by this distinguished Board and that we can count on continued guidance in implementing these programmes towards our collective commitment to ICPD and Agenda 2030.

I thank you.