



## SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

### OFFICIAL STATEMENT FOR THE 6<sup>th</sup> APPC 2013

#### *Protection, Empowerment, Equality*

#### *Building an inclusive society for all in Asia and the Pacific*

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#### **Chairperson**

#### **Excellences**

#### **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen**

First and foremost, let me join previous speakers in congratulating the chairpersonship of this session. Let me also congratulate other partners and agencies for the various roles this conference has entrusted to them.

Chairperson, the importance and relevance of the 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Population Conference (APPC) theme to my country Solomon Islands cannot be overemphasized. My country is relatively young, and that 80 per cent of the population live in rural areas and in many small but concrete ways we demonstrate and reaffirm our commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development of 1994 and the Millennium Development Declaration of 2000. However, like other Pacific Island Countries, Solomon Islands is faced with economic and social challenges which we must overcome with the very limited financial and technical resources at our disposal if we are to improve the quality of life of all our people.

On sexual reproductive health and rights, while we have improved on our efforts, we note with concern the low rate of contraceptive prevalence at 27%, an unacceptably high prevalence of teenage pregnancy at 68 per 1000 women 15-19 years, and a trend of increasing rates of STIs among our young people. We recognise that continuing to reposition Family Planning is crucial and is to be strengthened in the communities. Working with elected or parliamentary leaders, faith based and cultural leaders to better advocate for family planning is critical, given strong cultural and religious barriers and beliefs some of which are ill-informed.. We are working to ensure a stronger focus on girls in ensuring their access to quality and youth friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services, including access to contraception and partnerships with NGOs are important in this regard. Solomon Islands is working to also ensure comprehensive sexuality education in all our public and private schools and institutions. The Solomon Islands aims to reduce maternal mortality from 146 per 100,000 to 100 per 100,000 live births by 2015. Our national plans include to address unmet need for family planning, especially among vulnerable and underserved populations, increase the number of supervised delivery by trained skilled birth attendants from 85% to 95% in the next 4 years, ensure access to basic and comprehensive obstetric care through quality services and referrals systems and increase antenatal and postnatal coverage.

On gender equality, while many global events on gender draws attention to the gender injustices and inequalities that still exist, Solomon Islands is striving to effectively implement policies and action plans to promote gender equality, women's empowerment and combat violence against women and girls, in order to achieve a meaningful change for equality, participation, peace and development not just for some, but for all. National VAW prevalence rates reveal that approximately 2 out of 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of intimate partners, in their lifetimes. We recognize the need to strengthen the SAFENET system of prevention and referral and ensure that services for victims and survivors are available in even the most remote island communities. In influencing such policies, however, the lack of our women to be represented on statutory and other decision-making bodies continues to be a cause of concern. Since Independence in 1978, only one woman has ever been elected to the national parliament.

Our population is our most important resource as it provides the pool of labour force for development in the Solomon Islands. In fact the pace and direction of our national development depends eventually on the human resource we have, as we have plenty of it! However, our very youthful population with a median age of less than 20 years could be a liability and a constraint to national development and stability if measures are not taken to manage this sector. Our high rate of population growth at 2.3 per cent and our demographic structure create burdens and pressures on our national capacity to provide and deliver enough basic goods and services, protect our environment and maintain political and economic stability and freedom. In the long run, significant improvements in living standards could be difficult to achieve in view of our very young and fast growing population.

In conclusion Chairperson, Solomon Islands remains committed to the goals and objectives of the ICPD. Mr Chairman, among other things, the main constraints we face in accelerating progress on all fronts are the lack of critical financial and physical resources and institutional capacity. At the same time certain trends and developments are posing serious challenges to us.

However, as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework comes to a close in 2015, the Solomon Islands calls for a comprehensive and transformative Post 2015 development agenda. We call for development frameworks that must address the structural foundations of sexual reproductive health rights and gender-based inequality, including the recognition that inequalities are a consequence of the unequal relations of power. We are therefore asking that the global and regional frameworks take into consideration the social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of a country such as ours, and the resulting challenges for sustainable, human rights-based and gender responsive development.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.