



**Vanuatu Country Statement on ICPD Beyond 2014 presented at the  
Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference,  
Bangkok, 16 – 20 September 2013  
by Hon. Rialuth Serge Vohor, Minister of Health, Vanuatu**

Mr. Chairman, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, Excellencies, Colleague Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Development Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to take this moment to offer Vanuatu's humble words of appreciation to the Government of Thailand for hosting the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference held here in this beautiful City of Bangkok. I further extend our humble words of appreciation to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the collaborating UN Agencies, UNFPA who have assisted also in this undertaking. The conference organization from day1 until today has been excellent, the hospitality, the support you have given us cannot be overlooked and have made our stay here with you a pleasant one and certainly full of memories. Again thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, Vanuatu has a population of over 250,000 people living in well over 80 islands of the country. Of this total over 80 percent of the population are based in the rural areas of the country. The people of Vanuatu are the jewels of the country and it is to them and the support from development partners that Vanuatu has developed to where it is today. Although Vanuatu's population may not sound huge, one can not underestimate its problems and there are many and the reason why we congregate at these conferences to find solutions to address them and find a pathway to move forward with the ICPD beyond 2014.

Mr. Chairman, Population and their development is not an issue that one can overlook. It forms the fabric of the society. The Vanuatu Government

continues to commit itself to the Pacific, regional and global partnership to address the growing and diverse issues of population. In August this year the Pacific Parliamentarian congregated in Fiji and issued what is known as Moana Declaration on the position of the Pacific for this cause. It is only the beginning and already paving a way forward to be a partner in assuring hope for the people of the Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, as I have only a few minutes, I would like to use the remaining minutes to brief the meeting on the Vanuatu Government's strong commitment to the population and development beyond 2014.

1. The Vanuatu Government is guided in its development path by its Priorities Action Agenda of 2006 - 2015. The document is being reviewed and will further provide Government policies and priorities way forward for the Post 2014 Agenda. Population issues have and will continue to form an integral component of this policy direction.
2. In 2012 the Vanuatu Government launched its first National Population Policy of 2011-2020 in 2012. The population policy identify thematic policy areas which will be used to address population cause. The program is managed and coordinated at the Office of the Prime Minister which is also responsible for advising on the issues of Population Dynamics.
3. The Ministry of Health houses and coordinates a lot of the health programs such as Maternal Health, Family Planning, Adolescent and Youth, HIV/ AIDS and Sexual Reproductive Health which the Conference is deliberating on this week. The Ministry of Health itself is also undergoing a quick reform to basically improve the quality of health services to the people of Vanuatu. Most of the reforms take on board the issues of population and development being discussed and we are optimistic to make progress in population improvements and development in the course of the reform.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Health, as I said acts also as the focal point for all the population oriented health programs and most of the

programs which are implemented by NGOs and Civil Society Organizations. The cooperation and partnership between development partners, NGOs and Civil Societies have been excellent but our position is more result oriented. We want to see results in the programs being provided.

4. The Ministry of Education provides free education to children at primary level. It is also incorporating sexual and reproductive health in its education curriculum which would hopefully assist in the cause.
5. There is also the Department of Youth which is responsible for youth programs at government level mainly in the development of policies to address the issues of unemployment and the general problems of adolescent age groups. The Australian Funded TVET program is to be mentioned as it has made quite an impact in providing practical opportunities for the general population but especially the youth to decide on their future as a form of addressing unemployment and rural-urban migration.
6. There is also the department of Women Affairs which looks at policy development for women in Vanuatu. It also acts as the sounding board for children rights, gender equality and human rights.
7. A Youth Symposium has been developed under Department of Justice with a purpose to familiarize young people with Judicial Systems. The Human Rights is an integral component of this initiative for youth orientation and advocacy.
8. The Vanuatu Government has also established the following entities which provide specific roles and responsibilities to promote, advocate and address youth issues. They include:
  - a. Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs
  - b. Vanuatu Christian Council
  - c. Vanuatu National Council of Women

- d. Vanuatu National Youth Council. The Vanuatu Youth Council will be hosting a Youth Parliament in October.
- e. Parliamentary Secretariat

The following entities have also established and have contributed well and positively:

- a. Vanuatu Women Centre (Violence Against Women)
- b. Civil Society Organizations ie. Wan Smol Bag with their famous dramas.

Mr. Chairman, these are some of the commitments that the Vanuatu Government has put in place and will continue to institute reforms where appropriate to assist in the common cause that we all share in addressing the issues of population and development that we have before us.

Indeed, the issues of population and development are a regional and global agenda. Vanuatu alone cannot solve them. We are indebted to many of our Development Partners and I know many are also attending this conference. Please do pass on our humble words of appreciation to your respective government.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Development Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

**Hon. Rialuth Serge Vohor**  
**Minister of Health**  
**Republic of Vanuatu**