



Statement by Mr Linton Mchunu, Act. Director-General, Department of Social Development of the Republic of South Africa during the 55th Session of the Commission on Development and Development

24 April 2022

Mr Chairperson,

This delegation wishes to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election, and we thank the Secretariat for the excellent organisation of this important session – which is being held against such a critical and indeed timely theme of *“Population and Sustainable Development, in particular, sustained and inclusive economic growth”*. South Africa aligns itself to the statement delivered by the NEXUS Initiative.

We are particularly appreciative of this theme, as it reflects the correlation between population development, and the environment, as espoused by the ICPD Programme of Action, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Africa’s Agenda 2063. We also believe that sustained and inclusive growth can only be achieved if our populations are educated, healthy, adequately skilled, gainfully employed, and provided the space to be innovative – especially, our growing youthful populations. These are important ingredients for socio-economic growth and sustainable development.

It is for this reason that South Africa has adopted a number of pro-poor policies, whose objective is to lift our people out of poverty, and enable them to optimally achieve the demographic dividend - which research has shown, requires investing in youth, gender equality, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls, as well as their sexual and reproductive health and rights. We also do this within the context of South-South and Triangular Cooperation wherein we have a number of progressive programmes – working in partnership with PPD and UNFPA.

Through our adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights strategy, we have developed a comprehensive sexuality education implementation framework – and have started online teacher trainings, as well as learner support material to ensure that young people have access educational material and life skills that will assist them in making informed decision about their health and lives.

South Africa, like all the countries represented in this meeting, continues to grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which at its height, exposed South Africa’s existing developmental fault lines. However, we have learnt lessons from the experience of the pandemic and are now on a path of building back better and ensuring that we are ready for such shocks in the future.

Mr Chairperson,

Climate change is another global phenomenon that poses a threat to our efforts of realising the SDGs. In the past two weeks, South Africa’s East Coast region of KwaZulu-Natal, was severely affected by devastating floods, which left thousands of people displaced and over hundreds of fatalities, some of which were women and children. This was a stark reminder that we need to increase awareness of climate change in all communities and take more decisive action in addressing its causes. In addition, we need to improve investment in the green economy.

The impact of climate change and environmental degradation, will continue to disproportionately affect vulnerable people and communities, particularly women and children. It is equally important that we build resilient communities by investing in prevention and early warning systems, including disaster risk reduction, especially in adaptation and mitigation to reduce the impact and cost of natural disasters and address the adverse effects of climate change on achieving a sustained and inclusive economic growth for all.

Mr Chairperson,

Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is rife in South Africa and was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. In our quest to build back better, we are investing in quality education, training and skills development for our youth to ensure that they access meaningful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

One of South Africa's social initiatives includes an extensive social protection programme focusing on reducing deep poverty, and creating a social protection floor. We continue to provide social grants to more than 18million people on a monthly basis and have provided additional support to more than 10million people between the ages of 18-59 who suffered loss of income and became unemployed, during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is part of our governments social and economic relief package of more than US\$26 billion. We are now working on our **Economic Reconstruction and Recovery plan**, which is people centered, and premised on our National Development Plan which seeks to eradicate poverty, inequality and to create decent work by 2030, working with all sectors of society.

In conclusion, South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the Cairo Programme of Action including the Addis Ababa Declaration and most recently the Nairobi Commitments to ensure that we create a better life for all.

I thank you