

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT
Union for African Population Studies (UAPS)
Eight African Population conference
Kampala, Uganda
November 18-22, 2019

Theme: “Harnessing Africa's Population Dynamics for Sustainable Development: 25 Years after Cairo and Beyond”

In 1994, 179 governments adopted the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which underscores the integral and mutually reinforcing linkages between population and development. The ICPD programme was reinforced by other global agreements including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were adopted during the Millennium Summit in 2000.

Overall, Africa has made considerable progress towards achieving various development goals since the adoption of the MDGs. Some of the significant strides made include reducing maternal, infant, and HIV-related deaths, enhancing women's representation in national parliaments, enrolling more children in primary school, bridging the gender gap in primary school enrolment, improved access to safe drinking water, saving millions of lives through targeted investments in fighting malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis among others. These achievements underscore the important role that national commitment, supported by global partnerships can play in realizing development objectives. Despite the various improvements that have been made, considerable challenges remain and need to be addressed urgently. Indeed, the progress observed is not even across the continent or within countries, with significant disparities between and within countries, between women and men, between rural and urban residents, and between the poorest and the wealthiest in the continent. Other challenges relative to the environment, non-communicable diseases, civil unrest, etc. constitute significant threats to Africa's development.

Building on the momentum generated by the MDGs and seeking to address their unfinished business, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, an ambitious and transformative agenda to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions by 2030. Eradicating poverty, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and a requirement for achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental.

As a complement to the 2030 Agenda, Africa took a decisive step by formulating and adopting in 2013 the Agenda 2063: The Africa we want, a framework to guide Africa's development in the next 50 years, aiming to transform the continent into *“An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena”*. The Agenda 2063 presents a broader scope of developmental objectives expected to guide actions of governments, international development partners and civil society. At the same time, most African countries have adopted comprehensive long-term development plans to guide their socio-economic transformation. Last but not least, the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD), adopted by 53 African countries in 2013, provides a key framework for addressing population and development issues in Africa. Its rich set of commitments can simultaneously support Africa's efforts to harness a demographic dividend, advance human

rights and meet sustainable development goals. The AADPD rests on six thematic pillars: dignity and equality; place and mobility; health; partnership and international cooperation; data and statistics; and governance.

It is noteworthy that the continent's population dynamics, including the size, distribution and composition of the population, will influence prospects for sustainable development. The challenge that remains is effective implementation of various policies and actions to ensure that Africa's population growth, structure and distribution do not undermine efforts to reduce poverty, ensure food security, preserve the environment, and improve education, employment, and health while ensuring that successes of the MDGs are sustained towards realizing the SDGs. Today, Africa's high child dependency burden, resulting from the continent's youthful population (about 41% of the continent's population was less than 15 in 2017) is widely recognized as a major barrier to its socioeconomic development. Despite significant declines in fertility levels and mortality among children, women on average continue to have more children than they desire, and many children continue to die before their fifth birthday across the continent, often from preventable diseases. As highlighted by the AADPD that reaffirmed the continent's commitment to the ICPD Program of Action beyond 2014, the way forward to sustainable development requires significant policy shifts including timely implementation of effective policies, for example, those that aim to help countries realize the demographic dividend which provides an incredible opportunity for accelerated economic growth. Already, African countries have embraced the demographic dividend as a potential critical booster to their sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development.

Furthermore, although the continent is the least urbanized in the world, it is also rapidly urbanizing albeit in an uncontrolled manner and by 2050, the majority of Africans will be living in urban areas. As indicated by the adoption of a standalone goal on cities and urban areas in the 2030 Agenda, urbanization has been recognized as a key driver of economic growth and socioeconomic transformation, if well managed. Evidently, significant efforts will be needed to ensure Africa benefits from its rapid urbanization.

Overall, it is evident that despite the progress made since the adoption of the 1994 ICPD programme of action, considerable challenges remain and if efforts do not go into addressing the various challenges, the gains made recently in advancing the continent's transformation may be reversed.

The Eighth African Population Conference will bring together scientists from various disciplines, policymakers, practitioners, civil society organizations, international organizations, donors and other stakeholders from Africa and across the world to discuss the most pressing population and development issues confronting the continent and also examine opportunities and best practices that can be leveraged for the continent's sustainable development. Twenty-five years after the ICPD in Cairo, this UAPS conference will offer an opportune platform for all these stakeholders to engage and discuss how Africa can harness its unique population dynamics for sustainable development, while proposing multidisciplinary solutions to Africa's development challenges. Papers will respond to the following questions: From the 1994 ICPD programme of action to the 2015 SDGs, what worked? What did not work and why? Three elements will be key in measuring the conference's success: the quality of the papers presented, the level of participation and ultimately the contribution of the conference deliberations to addressing Africa's development challenges in the next decade and beyond.