



## **NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Remarks by Dr. Mohamed Sheikh, Director General, National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), Republic of Kenya at the China–Africa Conference on Population and Development.**

Chief Guest, Dr. Boniface Makokha, PhD, The Principal Secretary, State Department for Economic Planning

Principal Secretaries Present

Board Chair, National Council for Population Development

African Union Representatives

Representatives from Partners in Population and Development

UNFPA Representatives

CPDRC Representatives

Economic Planning Secretary

Distinguished Panelists, Delegates, Partners, friends

Ladies and Gentlemen

**Good morning.**

It is a great honour and privilege for me, on behalf of the Government of Kenya and the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), to warmly welcome you all to Kenya for this important China–Africa Conference on Population and Development. Kenya hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> China-Africa conference in 2017, and we are deeply honoured to host this 4<sup>th</sup> conference under the timely and relevant theme, “Health-Enabling Pathways for China–Africa Population Development.”

This theme captures the essence of what drives sustainable progress, recognising that good health is the foundation of population well-being, human capital development, and economic transformation.

### **Distinguished Guests,**

Across our continent and indeed globally, we have come to appreciate that population and development cannot be separated from health. A healthy population is a productive population. When individuals enjoy good health, they can learn, work, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to national development. Conversely, when health systems are weak, the social and economic costs are immense.

In Kenya, we see health as both a right and an investment. It is central to our development blueprint, Kenya Vision 2030, and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), which prioritises Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a key pillar for social and economic transformation.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) continues to lead Kenya’s efforts to integrate population dynamics into national and county development planning. Through the National Population Policy for Sustainable Development (2023), Kenya emphasises that managing population growth, improving health outcomes, and empowering citizens, especially youth and women, are essential pathways to harnessing the demographic dividend.

Our approach is guided by three key priorities:

- i. Universal Access to Reproductive Health: Ensuring that all individuals, particularly women and adolescents, have access to comprehensive reproductive health information and services.
- ii. Data-Driven Planning: Strengthening population data systems to inform evidence-based policy and planning at both national and devolved levels.
- iii. Human Capital Development: Aligning health and population policies with economic growth strategies to build a skilled, productive, and healthy workforce.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The demographic dividend presents a unique window of opportunity, a period when the working-age population outnumbered dependents, offering the potential for accelerated economic growth. However, this potential cannot be realized without a healthy population. Health is not merely a social objective; it is a fundamental economic imperative. Healthy individuals are more productive, innovative, and capable of contributing meaningfully to our economy. Thus, improving health outcomes accelerates the demographic transition — a key step toward the demographic dividend.

Investments in health translate directly into gains in human capital. When we prioritize maternal and child health, combat communicable and non-communicable diseases, and ensure access to comprehensive healthcare services, we build a resilient workforce ready to meet the demands of a dynamic economy. Moreover, good health reduces absenteeism and enhances learning outcomes, thereby fostering an environment where skills development can thrive.

As we plan for sustainable development, it is essential that health policies are integrated with economic strategies. This holistic approach ensures that resources allocated through national budgets effectively support healthcare infrastructure, preventive measures, and health education. It also underscores the importance of multisectoral collaboration, bringing together health professionals, economists,

educators, and policymakers, to create an enabling environment for our youth to flourish.

### **Distinguished Guests,**

As we host this conference here in Kenya, we are reminded of the power of partnership and shared learning. We have much to gain from China's remarkable progress in public health and population management, and equally, Africa's youthful energy and demographic potential present a strong foundation for mutual growth.

The theme of this conference calls upon us to move beyond theory into practical, collaborative action. We must collectively invest in health-enabling pathways that sustain population development across generations. Our investments in Universal Health Coverage, nutrition, and preventive healthcare are therefore not just about saving lives, they are about building the human capital base that will sustain our economic growth for decades to come.

As the home of NCPD and a long-standing partner in UNFPA's regional programs, Kenya will continue to champion population issues, coordinate dialogue, and promote South-South cooperation through initiatives such as this conference.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In conclusion, let us reaffirm our commitment to investing in health as a cornerstone of economic planning. By doing so, we not only improve individual lives but also unlock the full potential of our demographic dividend, a catalyst for inclusive growth and national prosperity.

Let us therefore seize this moment to strengthen the bridges between health, population, and development. Together, we can create a future where population growth is not a challenge to be managed, but a resource to be developed, a future where health truly enables prosperity for all. To all the distinguished delegates gathered here, I wish you fruitful deliberations and meaningful engagements throughout this conference. May our discussions here in Nairobi inspire stronger

collaboration, innovative solutions, and renewed commitment to building health-enabling pathways for China–Africa population development.

**Thank you.**