

**RAPPORTEUR GENERALS' REPORT**  
**ON THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF PGA's**  
**WEST AFRICA PROGRAM ON POPULATION & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
PARLIAMENT OF GHANA, ACCRA  
MAY 15-17, 2000

**DAY 1; 15 MAY, 2000.**

**Opening Ceremony**

The conference opened in the Chamber of Parliament of Ghana.

**Hon. Kenneth Dzirasah**, the First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana expressed his delight that the Ghanaian Branch of PGA, in collaboration with the Population Caucus of Ghana's Parliament, had the honor to host the Conference.

He challenged the Conference to look at PGA in retrospect, and to deliberate on how to build partnerships with local authorities, NGOs as well as to examine the legislative framework and the management of resources, dwelling on the experiences of Ghana and Senegal.

In his welcoming remarks, the **Rt. Hon. Justice D. F. Annan**, Speaker of Ghana's Parliament recognized the participation of Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Senegal, Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo, France and ECOWAS.

The Rt. Hon. Speaker was hopeful that the increased participation would be a foundation for Inter-Parliamentary relationships to engender the need for supranationalism among West African Parliamentarians and to facilitate the formulation of policies to address common problems.

According to Speaker Annan, Ghana's Parliament has already reinforced the punishments for sexual offences, outlawed the traditional practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), and passed the Children's Act to ensure that matters relating to children are paramount. The Rt. Hon. Speaker was particularly happy that the National Assembly of Senegal had also begun drafting laws on sexual and reproductive health with an emphasis on the status and rights of women. He

recommended a possible replication of these developments in other countries in the Sub-region.

Speaker Annan challenged the Conference and subsequent ones to establish follow-up structures which would ensure sound economic returns for sustainable development with a focus on reproductive health issues, empowerment of women and facilitate access to education, especially for the girl child.

In her welcoming address, **Ms. Shazia Rafi**, Secretary General of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) stated that goals of the program work with the Parliaments of Ghana and Senegal:

- To create a strong program of work on population and development among members within Parliament;
- To link their programs with the work of NGOs, research groups and the national academic community;
- To create a bilateral link between Ghana and Senegal to demonstrate, at the political level, how to overcome the artificial barriers between the two countries.

In conclusion, Ms. Rafi sought to disabuse the minds of many that Africa is a hopeless continent. In her view, Africa has the capacity to take its destiny in its hands and move the population and peace Agenda forward. Ms. Rafi pledged the assistance of PGA in these endeavours.

The following are excerpts from keynote addresses delivered during the opening ceremony of the conference.

**Mr. Haruna Warkani** delivered the first keynote address on behalf of the Secretary General of ECOWAS, H.E. Lansana Kouyate. According to Mr. Warkani, in this era of globalisation, the integration of African economies -particularly ECOWAS states- is vital not only for survival as a continent but for the success of its future. Mr. Warkani proclaimed that democracy is a precarious state of affairs in many parts of Africa due to the international community who benefits from free and unfair access to developing markets and unhindered repatriation of profits. Mr. Warkani further

supported his argument concerning democracy by stating that the international community promoted democratic order in Sierra Leone but ignored it when that same democracy was mutilated by civil warfare for the control of Sierra Leone's precious resource, diamonds. The success or failure of Sierra Leone depends on vested business interests and the will of the international community.

According to Mr. Warkani, Africa's problems with democracy stem from the West's greed for wealth. In order to stop this, ECOWAS has enacted a protocol on the moratorium and importation, exportation, manufacture, and use of light weapons in all member states. Additionally, conflict observation and monitoring posts are to be established in strategic locations in the sub region to monitor and forestall conflicts according to Mr. Warkani.

Delivering a message from **Dr. Nafis Sadik** the Executive Director of UNFPA, her Representative Mr. Emmanuel Tofoatsi, Ag. Resident Representative of UNFPA/Ghana, noted that the arrival of the six billionth child last year has raised serious questions on population control for the future. The concerns that most nations share concerning population and sustainable development are food, health, education, shelter and gender equality.

Dr. Sadik highlighted population issues discussed at the Cairo Plus 5 last year.

One issue was that a select few countries have fully integrated population and sustainable development into broader developmental policy. According to Dr. Sadik, one of the main reasons why countries do not adopt population regulations into their national agenda is because of the lack of resources and political will. She believes that this may initiate a call for leadership as well as technical expertise. It is this expertise and commitment to sustainable development that is being cultivated through alliances such as Parliamentarians for Global Action and the Parliaments of Ghana and Senegal, Dr. Sadik cited. Such alliances are being effective on the grass root(s) level with parliamentarians and their constituencies.

The third keynote address was delivered by **Dep. Moustapha Ka**, President of FAAPPD and Deputy Speaker of the Senegalese National Assembly. He affirmed that the objective of the Conference is to create avenues for the familiarization and sharing of ideas on sexual reproduction in Africa. Dep. Ka lauded the stride made by Ghana in this area, particularly in the area of female genital mutilation (FGM). He indicated that a workshop was organized in Kampala, Uganda bringing other countries in Southern and Central Africa together to exchange ideas on sexual health, family planning, and reproductive health. Dep. Ka cited the aims of FAAPPD was to work in close collaboration with PGA and to strengthen such collaboration for the well being of the people.

The final keynote address was delivered by **Dep. Ibrahima Fall**, PGA program Convenor for the West African Program on Population and Sustainable Development and member of the National Assembly of Senegal. He said PGA established a Task Force in 1991, which among other things was to assist Parliamentarians to collaborate with NGOs and governmental agencies to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to the country's population policies. Furthermore, PGA also organizes workshops to update Parliamentarians on population related issues in their constituencies. He went on to say that, PGA is the only global network of individual parliamentarians that has multi-dimensional program objectives and is affiliated with the United Nations. Some of those programs include assistance in conflict resolution situations such as the Lusaka Agreement involving the Democratic Republic of Congo and other Eastern African States.

In his inaugural address, **H.E. John Atta Mills**, Vice-President of Ghana, noted that the relationship between population and sustainable development to peoples the world over cannot be over-emphasized. Mr. Mills stressed that this becomes even more crucial for West African States since a high rate of population growth is the

cause of poverty and underdevelopment, at both the grass root and national level(s). Mr. Mills declared that this under-development then becomes a potential tool for instability and conflict which basically leads to non-progression.

He cited steps that were being taken by various governments during the Cairo ICPD Conference in 1994. According to Mr. Mills, the outcome of the ICPD placed the world's governments in a position of responsibility and accountability. This agenda was highlighted by the Plan of Action which focuses on the numerous links between population, economic growth and sustainable development. According to Mr. Mills, this strategy must be supported by the promotion of reproductive health rights, genuine empowerment of women, access to education- particularly for female children- and the reduction in maternal and child mortality at every level in society. It must also be noted, that the whole approach to women's health in general needs to be re- examined. The realization of these goals by the world's developing countries is a daunting challenge that must be pursued in order for countries in Western Africa to survive Mr Mills affirmed.

### **SESSION I: The Specific Role of Parliamentary Caucuses/Networks in Addressing Population-Related Needs**

The first session was chaired by **Dep. Mamadou Lamine Thiam**, M.P. Senegal.

**Hon. Alhaji A. Salifu**, Minister of State, M.P. and Chairman for the Ghana Parliamentary Caucus on Population and Development (GPCPD) gave a synopsis of the Committee's activities since its formal inauguration by the Speaker in April 1999. These, he said, included meetings, collaboration with national organizations and governmental agencies, educational seminars and workshops. Hon. Salifu stated

that the Committee organized constituency activities on adolescent reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. According to Mr. Salifu, the research involved 400 respondents, who were asked about their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour relating to Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS. This strategy seemed to foster a dialogue between individuals at the grassroot and government level. Mr. Salifu went on to say that this approach at open dialogue was being adopted by such localities as the Ashanti, and Northern regions in Ghana. To date, ten other members of the population caucus have filed proposals for activities to be carried out in their various constituencies despite the fact that they have not yet received concrete support. Finally, the GPCPD is currently working to initiate a complete legal review of all laws in Ghana impacting on reproductive health and rights, sexual health and rights, and family planning Mr. Salifu concluded.

**Dep. Momar Lo**, Chair of the Senegalese Parliamentary Network on Population and Development, presented a paper on the current objectives taking place in Senegal. Mr. Lo focused on the objectives of the Parliamentary Network since April of 1999. The initiatives included the promotion of a permanent dialogue among Parliamentarians that examined population policy and legislation in Western Africa. He said these objectives focused on population issues in terms of poverty, and the promotion of the status of women in reproductive health and family planning.

Mr. Lo mentioned that a second initiative being undertaken by the population network, is the establishment of a regional co-ordinating body to ensure the implementation of the ICPD and Ouagadougou action plans. Also included in this initiative is the implementation of a National Parliamentary Network on Population in the Saharan Countries. As a result of this second initiative there has been development of a dynamic partnership both on the local and regional level between parliamentary networks and international institutions Mr. Lo cited. Institutions such as UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, and USAID have been instrumental in funding and executing these programs of action.

**Dr. Benedicta Ababio**, Local Resident Advisor of The Policy Project, Ghana, applauded the achievements of the GPCPD. She went on to call for adequate support from donors, NGOs and communities themselves to sustain the productive course to change laws and also improve the environment for population and reproductive health activities in the country.

The second discussant, **Mr. Amadou Cisse**, representative of CONGAD a Senegalese umbrella organization for NGOs, urged governments to pursue and implement decentralized programs that would allow the management of population issues at the local level. He also asked Parliaments to involve the people when issues affecting them are discussed.

In the general discussion that followed contributions were made by several people including; Dep. Labou Toure of the Mali National Assembly, Hon. Emmanuel Zumakeh of the Parliament of Ghana, Dep. Dr. Sinatoko Albert of the Benin National Assembly, Dep. Dr. P.M. Tsitsel of the National Assembly of Cameroon and Dr. Warkani of ECOWAS.

### **Luncheon Session I**

In a much appreciated presentation during lunch, Mrs. Ernestina Naana Hagan, Vice President of FIDA/Ghana, underscored the fact that women play a key role in all areas of the economy, sadly, their contribution is undervalued and invariably taken for granted. She established that:

- Women are at the Centre of Production;
- Periphery of Benefits;
- Women count but are not counted.

According to Mrs. Hagan, discrimination against women is a world-wide problem (not simply a west African one) and a concerted effort has been made at both the international and national levels to change the situation. She acknowledged some

agendas that have taken place on an international level. One being the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention of the Rights of the Child; Ghana has ratified this convention Mrs. Hagan stated.

A second initiative being focused on internationally is the program of action on the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994. Mrs. Hagan said the ICPD agenda affirmed the application of universally recognized human rights standards concerning all aspects of population programs.

The third initiative with an international focus concerning women is the Strategic Objectives of the Platform for Action of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women in 1995. Mrs. Hagan said that the Beijing women's conference was a global effort, which echoed the explicit recognition and reaffirmation of women's sexual and reproductive rights.

Finally, Mrs Hagan ended her address by declaring that her organization (FIDA) would continue to champion the Human Rights of Women and Children to improve the quality of their lives and enable them to exercise effectively their rights in matters concerning population issues.

## **SESSION II: Legal Review of Laws Relating to Population**

Session II was chaired by **Prof. Fred T. Sai**, PGA's Senior Advisor. In his opening Prof. Sai touched upon the importance of a conducive legislative environment, the weakness of current legislation and the current status of the legal review in Ghana and Senegal.

The first speaker, **Ms. Juliana Dogbadzi**, gave a personal testimony of her life as a shrine slave. Her ordeal began at the age of six when she was kidnapped and taken to a shrine to atone for the crimes of her grandfather; a customary practice in rural Ghana, she stated. Ms. Dogbadzi said she endured a life of poverty and



unimaginable suffering. She stated that she also had to have sexual relations with the priest as well as support herself and her children through cattle farming. Ms. Dogbadzi finally escaped and found International Needs, an NGO which helps women in similar circumstances in Ghana escape the life of bondage. She said through the assistance of International Needs she was able to educate herself in order to provide a living for herself and her children.

**Prof. Akua Kuenyehia**, Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Ghana/Legon, spoke on the planned legal review in Ghana of laws that affect reproductive health and rights, sexual health and rights and family planning. Prof. Kuenyehia discussed the socio-cultural context of reproductive rights in Ghana. She said women's customary rights coded absolute control their sexuality to men and that even in the event of divorce, women are more often were short-changed in the distribution of property.

**Dep. Oumou Diallo**, MP, Senegal said that the national health policy in Senegal is based on the concept of primary health care by the Alma Ata Declaration, whose objective is involving populations in the management of health care programs. She stressed that the system is being reformed through decentralization, based on the ICPD recommendations on individual reproductives. According to Ms. Diallo, it is through decentralization that this policy aims for the creation of 45 health districts with the participation of the community. This policy brought about an improvement in the provision of healthcare throughout the country.

### **Dinner Address**

**Dr. Mary Stooove Grant**, a Member of the Council of State of Ghana, commended the Ghanaian Parliament and PGA for the work done so far. She went on to, and echoed Dr. Nafis Sadik's assertion that the question of population is about people and their well-being, which should be seen as a human-centred development issue and should therefore be the basis for sustainable socio-economic development. The problems

inherent here are trans-national and need concerted actions by all countries in the West African Sub-region including their Parliaments, she said. Dr. Grant urged all governments to convert their opinions into action programs. She also advocated for a regional approach in addressing the population needs of people, which she said, is more crucial now than ever before.

## DAY 2 ; 16 MAY, 2000.

### **SESSION III: Mobilizing Resources**

Day two of the conference began with issues relating to resource mobilization including Parliament's effective role on population issues. This session was chaired by **Dep. Abdoulaye Sy**, National Assembly of Senegal.

The first speaker, **Ms. Laura Slobey**, Chief of the Population and Nutrition Office, USAID/Ghana, recounted the collaboration of USAID and Ghana using Ghana's "Vision 2020" program, which recognizes the importance of slowing down population growth to achieve economic development objectives.

Ms. Slobey said that USAID has been very helpful to Ghana in such areas as policy development, improved service delivery and increased awareness of population, and HIV/AIDS issues. USAID and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) also collaborated in the acquisition of skills, capacity building and the provision of resources for Parliament.

Finally, Ms. Slobey assured the conference that the proposal for a legal review of laws in Ghana affecting reproductive health and rights, sexual health and rights, and family planning will receive a most favourable consideration.

**Dr. Ayitey Coleman**, Director at Ministry of Health, Ghana, stated that population issues are about survival and well-being and freedom of citizens as contained in the 1994 population policy of Ghana- and that these are in agreement with the goals of Parliamentarians, who seek to advance the well-being of the community. She urged

the need for Parliament and the Ministry of Health to collaborate in the formulation and passage of legislation, while mobilizing civil society for political action.

**Dr. Joana Nerquaye-Tetteh**, Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), speaking on the opportunities available for MPs to work with civil society on the community level, identified NGOs as the main source for the mobilization of resources for rural development. She commended World Vision International and the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana as two institutions whose intervention in rural communities have had tremendous impact. She urged MPs to mobilize both the human and material resources of communities including NGOs for development.

In the discussion that followed **Hon. Ahmed Musah**, MP, Ghana observed that MPs as national legislators played a very active political role at the local level. Hon. Musah observed that the “vicious cycle” of rapid population growth had impacted negatively on the development agenda. Population growth rates in lesser developed areas such as Ghana’s various constituencies far exceeded the acceptable levels by development agencies he said. There has been a parliamentary effort to promote poverty reduction and bring about growth and development. It is important to note that population must be controlled as well as the rapid increase of the infection rate of HIV/AIDS Mr. Musah concluded.

#### **SESSION IV: Coalition building**

Session IV, chaired by **Hon. Fred Blay**, Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Ghana, dealt with the role of civil society organizations and academics in assisting MPs working at the local level.

**Mr. Alex Banful**, Managing Director of Ghana Social Marketing Foundation (GSMF) expressed the concern that Ghana’s population growth rate of 3% per annum had outpaced the country’s capacity to provide adequate public services for its people.

He urged Parliament, civil society, Government, researchers and NGOs to come together and pursue an agreed upon agenda in the formulation of national policies.

On his part, **Mr. Amadou Cisse**, representative of CONGAD, said CONGAD is an independent umbrella organization co-ordinating the activities of all NGOs in Senegal. He said CONGAD collaborates well with the Senegalese Parliament in two key areas i.e. the mobilization of resources and the introduction of legislation to enhance the objectives of the Cairo initiative.

In their presentation, **Ms. Marie Claire Tesson-Millet**, President of Equilibres & Population and **Dep. Jean Pierre Kucheida** MP from France, stressed on the important role Equilibres & Populations play in assisting NGOs to perform their functions. E&P relies on a network of journalists to learn about public opinion on population and reproductive health issues. They said that the partnership between E & P and French parliamentarians is an exemplary one.

After a discussion that acknowledged the great value of co-operation and sharing of distinct views between parliamentarians and agents of civil society, **Dr. Francis Yankee**, Director of Programs, Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), gave an introduction to the field trip planned for the third day of the conference.

### **Luncheon Session**

Speaking on the theme: *"Our Commitment to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in Ghana"*

**Dr. K. Addo-Kufour**, MP Ghana, traced the history of the disease from the early 1980s to date. He said since the first cases were diagnosed in 1986, the infection has spread relentlessly to about 38,000 infected cases that were recorded in 1998.

Dr. Addo-Kufour said the situation facing Ghana is a grim one. There is scarce health resources, widespread poverty, polygamy, a high illiteracy rate and some degree of superstition compound the HIV/AIDS crisis. He stated that the people most affected by this pandemic are those in their productive years, and conceded that the government alone cannot shoulder the health and financial burden if the

situation is not checked. Dr. Addo-Kufour called for the involvement and support of all sectors of the population to promote interventions to reduce high risk sexual behaviours, treat other sexually transmitted diseases, maintain a safe blood supply, ensure the use of sterile needles and blades, and adopt a compassionate attitude towards HIV infected patients.

#### **SESSION V: HIV/AIDS in West Africa; MPs Multiple Roles**

The Conference was given a personal testimony of the reality of HIV/AIDS by **Mr. Douglas Sem**. He decided to draw attention to the existence of the deadly disease to the youth who constitute the future of the nation. Mr. Sem has since been at radio stations throughout Ghana, giving talks in schools and featured in the print media on the reality of HIV/AIDS. He appealed to governments, parliamentarians, and opinion leaders to join hands in the fight against the HIV/AIDS disease. He asked for an intensive educational drive to create awareness of the effects of the disease on youth and the public in general.

**Professor Fred T. Sai**, population specialist and PGA's Senior Advisor, outlined some of the factors which have contributed to the rapid rise of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Some pertinent factors include immigration, war and armed conflicts, and the lack of knowledge about the nature of the disease and its causes. Professor Sai informed the conference that the disease has the potential of affecting a reduction in life expectancy by 7-10 years, huge economic loss, widespread orphanage, and rising expenditure (individual, family and national).

**Dr. Moses Adibo**, Deputy Minister of Health (Ghana), spoke on the topic "*Doing It and Doing It Right*". He indicated that HIV/AIDS was first recorded in Ghana in March 1986. At the end of 1986 forty-two (42) cases had been detected. About 38,000 cases were recorded at the end of 1998. He reiterated that the disease is on a serious rise. Dr. Adibo further stated that awareness of the disease is almost universal in Ghana but has not yielded change. Several methods and strategies have been set in motion to curtail the situation. Examples include the National Response

Initiative, the promotion of safe sex practices, institutional capacity building, management and treatment of Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and counseling services.

Dr. Adibo said counseling and care remain the key strategies in support of the already infected and affected. He said this strategy is offered prior to testing and following the test. He also intimated that over 600 counselors have been trained nationwide. Dr. Adibo added that advocacy and capacity building have been crucial in the response. He said a national policy is currently being finalized and that it is expected to provide policy direction and an enabling environment for the pursuit of various interventions.

### **SESSION VI:Where To Go From Here?**

**Hon. Theresa A. Tagoe**, MP from Ghana, presented the GPCPD Action for 2000/2001, a five-point plan to be executed between May 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 – May 1<sup>st</sup> 2001:

- To educate new MPs who would be in Parliament after the December election;
- To expand activities of MPs at the Constituency level beyond the level of HIV/AIDS education to include adolescent reproduction health and formal education;
- To commence the review of all laws in the country affecting reproduction health and women sexual rights;
- Intensify the mobilization of both economic and human resources from within and without;
- To request for the extension of the attachment of the Parliamentary Fellow, Dr. Cand. Staffan I. Lindberg , to the GPCPD for one year.

**Dep. Momar Lô**, MP from Senegal, presented the Action Plan for 2000/2001 for the Senegalese Network on Population and Development. The Action Plan of the Senegalese Network includes:

- Collaborate with NGOs to draw funding for research;

- Activities and execution of projects;
- To work on the appropriate legal framework on matters concerning population rights of women and children, as well as for rural development;
- To lobby for increase in budgetary allocation for activities affecting population at all levels.

In her speech **Ms. Christina Zampas**, Senior Program Officer, Population and Sustainable Development, PGA, emphasized that there is a need for increased collaboration among all stakeholders; MPs, NGOs and civil society organizations in the area of reproductive health and population. Ms. Zampas itemized ways in which PGA plans to scheme the expansion of the program to include new countries in West Africa:

- PGA will conduct an evaluation in the various countries and identify the role each stakeholder can play;
- PGA will assist in forming Population Caucuses in the countries selected for expansion of the program;
- PGA will assist with technical staff to develop action plans for these caucuses;
- PGA hopes to be able to continue to arrange periodical regional meetings to share information and experiences;
- The outcome of the evaluation and review process will be communicated to help MPs shape appropriate legislation.

### CLOSING CEREMONY

The Chair for the closing ceremony was the First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, **Hon. Kwabene Adjei**, Majority Leader of Parliament and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Ghana. He commended participants for their dedication to the conference and the GPCPD for their hard work and hoped that the population project initiated by PGA and the Parliaments of Ghana and Senegal would spread to cover the entire sub-region. Members of Parliament are ombudsmen for their people and as such must act to protect human rights that have so often been infringed upon

in Africa since independence he declared. Gender mainstreaming, poverty reduction, good governance, and sustainable development are important parts of this effort, Mr Adjei said.

The Secretary General of PGA , **Ms. Shazia Rafi**, said in her closing remarks that the PGA secretariat was proud to be associated with the West African Program. She stated that through the work of Ghana's Parliament, much more has been achieved than was even hoped for three years ago when this program was initiated. PGA's Secretariat will do its very best to extend and continue this success forward to other West African countries and to other parts of the world as well. There is an enormous pressure from members of PGA from many countries to replicate this program in their countries Ms. Rafi said.

The closing address was delivered by **Hon. Kenneth Dzirasah**, First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Ghana. Hon. Dzirasah noted that without a doubt, this conference had created the necessary goodwill among all stakeholders for sustained collaborative efforts to take place in the near future. The conference had also provided a mutual evaluation of the program in the respective West African countries he said. Population size and growth in relation to the capability to regenerate sufficient resources has always posed a major problem in Third World countries, Mr. Dzirasah noted. Through efforts like those undertaken in PGA's West African Program some of these issues can be tackled. The Hon. Dzirasah strongly advocated the sharing of information and experience between parliamentarians in the region. The West African 'Pilot' Program is no longer an experimental undertaking he argued, and as such, the notion of 'Pilot' in the title should be dropped he stated. Hon. Dzirasah also pointed out that it is time that parliamentarians pursue the request of internal sources of funding for some of the activities of the program in order to enhance its sustainability. Finally, he commended PGA in general and the Secretary General as well as the program's Senior Adviser Prof. Fred T. Sai in particular, on behalf of all involved parliamentarians for the successful first 3 years of the current program.



**Hon. Kojo Armah**, MP for Ghana, performed the vote of thanks to everybody who had worked so hard to make this conference a success. In particular, Hon. Armah thanked Mr. Speaker for agreeing to host the conference, the organising parties in Parliament for their efforts and PGA for the initiative, logistical support and tireless work to assist parliamentarians in all membership countries. The conference had been very intense he noted, with even papers delivered during lunch. He also extended a special thanks to the courageous testimony of Douglas Sem of the reality of living with HIV/AIDS.

#### **JOINT PARLIAMENTARY DECLARATION**

The Conference adopted a declaration based on all the seven topics as well as the discussions that formed the basis for the Conference. In adopting the declaration, the Conference gave special cognizance of the following:

- The crucial role played by Parliamentarians in implementing the ICPD program of action;
- The need for increased political will on issues of population, human rights and reproductive and sexual rights;
- The lack of adequate funding to address population related issues;
- The collaboration between Parliamentarians and NGOs to advance the ICPD Programme of Action and women's reproductive health rights;
- The impact of HIV/AIDS on sustainable development and growth in Africa;
- The Conference also approved a nine point resolution including the following:

- The recognition of the formation or existence of Parliamentary Caucus on Population and Development;
- The joint effort of MPs, NGOs, Government and traditional leaders in the fight against women's health and reproductive rights, HIV/AIDS, FGM and related issues;
- The sharing of information through regular meetings ;
- Educational campaigns;
- A comprehensive legal framework prohibiting discrimination against women and;
- The need for Governments and Parliaments to allocate funds and human resources to address reproductive health and family planning services.