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The Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Ghana, I would like to extend our congratulations to you on your appointment as the Chair of the 56th Session of the Commission on Population and Development and wish you and the Bureau the very best during your tenure. We also express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for organizing this session.

Ghana aligns itself with the statement delivered by Cuba on behalf of the G-77 and China and wishes to make the following additional remarks in its national capacity.

Ghana has made significant investment in improving human capital by expanding access to universal health care and basic education. In 2021, Ghana conducted its first digital Population and Housing Census, which indicated intercensal decline in fertility and a shift in the population structure from one dominated by children to one dominated by the youth. According to the 2021 census, 35% of Ghana's population are below the age of 15, while 56% are below the age of 25; and about 1.2 million children of school going age are not attending school.

These demographic trends present both prospects and challenges for the country's development.

Investment in this growing youthful population and the wider economy is necessary to reap the demographic dividends from the emerging youth bulge. However, for the demographic dividend to be realized, the labor force must be equipped with the skills and productive job opportunities created for them to contribute to economic growth, and in this regard, education is pivotal.

To promote investment in education, the Government of Ghana introduced the Comprehensive Free Senior High School initiative and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) together with the school feeding programme to increase access to all inclu

education, social, security and economic implications. It increases expenditure with suboptimal returns thus frustrating the nation's ability to improve individual and community well-being.

In acknowledging the pivotal role of reproductive health education and services in addition to investments in food security, adequate infrastructure, and quality education on our journey to prosperity, the Government of Ghana is implementing the "Back to School Campaign", which ensures adolescent mothers are re-enrolled to complete their education.

Overall, investing in eliminating child marriage and early childbearing, education, and the economy can help ensure that young people in Ghana are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to economic growth. With this, Ghana will be poised to make substantial progress towards some SDG goals (1) no poverty (2) zero hunger (3) good health (4) quality education (5) gender equality (8) decent work and economic growth (10) reduced inequality and (11) sustainable cities and communities, peace justice.

Investment in eliminating child marriage and improving quality education plays a vital role in improving our standard of living and in alleviating the stress of poverty.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, by prioritizing the elimination of child marriage and early childbearing, we will be able to feed, love, educate and protect more children to ultimately, harness their potential to fit the needs of this century to guarantee their individual prosperity and our common good; we would be co-creating a healthier, highly educated, happier, and equitable society.

Thank you for your attention.