

**Oral Statement Submitted by Population Action International To the Forty-Fourth Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (11-15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2011)  
Delivered by Suzanne Ehlers, President and CEO**

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I would first like to thank the Bureau for your leadership of this 44<sup>th</sup> Session. Distinguished delegates, I appreciate the opportunity to address such an august audience. Before I begin, I would like to associate myself with the exceptional remarks of the nine non-governmental organizations whose representatives spoke before me.

Population Action International (PAI) works to ensure that every person has the right and access to sexual and reproductive health, so that humanity and the natural environment can exist in balance and fewer people live in poverty.

PAI welcomes this year's discussion on "Fertility, reproductive health and development."

The Programme of Action for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) affirms the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. Access to modern family planning and contraceptive services and commodities are a fundamental part of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and improve women's health and well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the importance of SRHR, an estimated 215 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using modern contraception.<sup>2</sup> In order to achieve universal access to reproductive health and the full realization of reproductive rights in resource-poor settings, donors and host country governments must increase financial investment and take a more integrated, inclusive approach to address the needs of marginalized groups, including women, youth and people living with HIV.

The lack of adequate funding remains a significant constraint to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD, and to the realization of sexual and reproductive rights. We encourage donors and governments to honor commitments, and make every effort to mobilize resources to ensure that the health, development and human rights-related objectives of the Programme of Action are met, paying special attention to achieving universal access to modern methods of family planning. Priority should also be given to evidence-based policies and programs that integrate sexual and reproductive health, HIV, and maternal health services.

As the ICPD goal year fast approaches, the Commission's meaningful engagement with members of civil society is critical to advancing the ICPD agenda. We look forward to working with the Commission and its members in preparation for and during the Interactive Hearings and the General Assembly's Special Session to assess the status of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, and beyond to make sure that governments and the international community effectively address obstacles to realizing the ICPD goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Singh et al. 2009. Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health." New York: Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA.

<sup>2</sup> Singh, S, J Darroch, L Ashford and M Vlassoff. 2009. Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing In Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health." New York: Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA.