

Statement Made by the United States of America in Response to Presentation by H.E. Sylvie Lucas, President of ECOSOC at the Commission on Population and Development on April 2, 2009

Madam Chair,

I would like to thank the President of ECOSOC, Ms. H. E. Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg, for her presentation regarding the Annual Ministerial Review for 2009. I also appreciate the remarks of the distinguished representatives of other countries today. The United States also expresses its appreciation for the ongoing work of the Population Division.

We are pleased that the theme for the review this year is “Global Public Health.” This is of course a topic of great relevance for this meeting of the Commission on Population and Development that is focusing on the Contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development goals.

United States is honored to express its renewed and deep commitment to the goals and aspirations of the ICPD Program of Action. President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton, as well as the United States Congress, have already acted strongly to support women’s and young people’s health, human rights, and empowerment; global partnership; and the wider development agenda embraced by the Program of Action.

We would like to emphasize that the Program of Action provides guidance for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and that achieving these goals requires that we achieve the ICPD goals, most particularly universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the protection and promotion of reproductive rights. Further, the ICPD Program of Action recognizes the critical importance of meeting the needs and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the largest-ever generation of adolescents. It also recognizes that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women must be protected, so that women can make their own health and fertility decisions, which helps to ensure healthy, productive families and communities as well as sustainable, prosperous, and stable societies.

Madam Chairman, our discussion this week has revealed various trends and data about population dynamics and their relation to maternal health and family planning. While there has been progress in many countries over the past 15 years on many aspects of the Programme of Action, this progress has not been universal. A striking fact from the UN's 2008 report on the Millennium Development Goals is that complications during pregnancy and as a result of childbirth remain a serious cause of death for women of child-bearing age in developing countries. There was little progress between 1990 and 2005. The report says that in Sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's risk of dying from treatable or preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth over the course of her lifetime is 1 in 22, compared to 1 in 7,300 in developed regions.

This illustrates that we need to prioritize comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, as defined in the Program of Action and the Key Actions for its further implementation, in our work to strengthen health systems. The cluster of services agreed in the Program of Action is all essential to save women's lives and protect their health as well as protect their reproductive rights. The United States is committed to ensuring, among others:

- access to safe, effective, and affordable, methods of voluntary family planning through good quality care that provides full information and respects the client's choices;
- the range of services needed during pregnancy as well as skilled attendants for delivery and after birth; and
- diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Madam Chairman, reproductive health and family planning programs are an essential part of maternal and child health, and thus are vital topics for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review that will focus on Global Public Health. We trust that ECOSOC will recognize the vital importance of Reproductive Health and Family Planning.