



11 April 2011

## 44<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development

**Agenda item 3: Actions in follow-up to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development**

**Statement by HE Mr Andrew Goledzinowski  
Deputy Permanent Representative  
of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)



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Mr Chairman,

Australia welcomes the discussion in this forty fourth session on Fertility, Reproductive Health and Development and thanks the Secretary-General for his reports to the Commission on Population and Development.

The reports highlight the challenges the international community faces to achieve MDGs 4 and 5, particularly related to improving sexual and reproductive health, and the funding required to fully implement the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

The Australian Government agrees with the reports conclusions and urges Member States to implement as a matter of priority commitments made in 2010 in support of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. We applaud global gains in reducing poverty and reducing maternal and child deaths. But we must continue to focus our efforts on the needs of poor and marginalised groups who bear the greatest burden of disease.

We know that many of the maternal and child deaths are preventable. We must address the unmet need for family planning and strengthen health systems to deliver universal basic health care. We have the means to achieve this if we focus our efforts.

Australia is concerned with the high rates of fertility and maternal mortality in many countries, including in our own region. In Papua New Guinea, for example, which has one of the highest fertility rates in the Pacific, only 39 per cent of births are attended by a skilled birth attendant and the maternal mortality ratio is 470 per 100,000 births. As well

as accessing better health care, we recognise the importance of education and promoting gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls to improving women's health and that of their families.

Australia is committed to increasing its support for sexual and reproductive health. At the launch of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health in September 2010, Australia committed to spend \$1.6 billion on maternal and child health over the next five years.

Australia is implementing our commitment by working closely with neighbours in the Asia Pacific to deliver more effective health outcomes for women and children. We are doing this by strengthening health services, including through training midwives and birth attendants, and providing essential drugs and equipment.

Australia is also increasing its spending on family planning because it is a proven effective and cost efficient way of improving maternal and child health outcomes. Australia recognises the important work of the United Nations Population Fund towards achieving the health and gender related MDGs and accelerating progress and national ownership of the ICPD Programme of Action. Australia is pleased to continue our partnership with UNFPA through supporting the implementation of its Strategic Plan for 2008-2013.

But our focus moving forward should not just be about spending more. As the Secretary-General's reports state, adequate funding, *together* with political commitment and creative planning, are key to achieving progress the MDGs. Member States and their partners need effective interventions that are value for money and achieve results. We must look to integrate the way we work and avoid fragmented and inefficient responses.

We are working with development partners in the Asia Pacific region to help identify bottlenecks to achieving MDGs 4 and 5 and estimate the costs associated with overcoming them. This provides a strong evidence base from which countries can make efficient budgetary decisions about the most effective ways to allocate their resources.

Another example is the alliance Australia has formed with the USA, UK and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, called the Alliance for Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health. The Alliance aims to improve coordination around maternal and child health issues, including increasing access. It aims to contribute to the global target of 100 million new contraceptive users by 2015.

Progress towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health can be achieved. Some countries are achieving impressive results. Bangladesh, for example has achieved a 40 per cent reduction in maternal deaths over the last decade.

With firm political will, adequate funding, integrated and innovative programming, and strong engagement at all levels, universal access to sexual and reproductive health can be attained. Australia is committed and strongly supports this session of the Commission on Population and Development and believes Member States can, by working together in partnership, put the health needs of women and children back at the centre of the development agenda.

Thank you.