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Ipas oral statement for the 48th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development

My name is Dr. Nihinlola Mabogunje and I am speaking on behalf of Ipas, a global nongovernmental organization dedicated to ending preventable deaths and injuries to women from unsafe abortion and to advancing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

I serve as the Country Director of Ipas Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the many countries in which abortion care is still legally allowed only in the most extreme circumstances – when the pregnancy threatens the woman's life.

If a Nigerian woman becomes pregnant because of sexual violence, it doesn't matter – she is denied care. If a schoolgirl becomes pregnant either because her teacher or family member rapes her – she is denied care. If a woman becomes pregnant because she has no information about how to prevent pregnancy or no access to contraception – she is denied care.

If women and girls in Nigeria decide to terminate their pregnancies in order to protect their health and reclaim their futures, they may be treated as criminals, or even die due to lack of access to safe abortion services.

Despite the legal barriers, many desperate women and girls decide that termination is their best option. An estimated 760,000 abortions still occur in Nigeria every year – mostly clandestine, many unsafe. Of these, one out of four will result in serious side effects. At least 3,000 women and girls will die. These deaths are totally preventable through access to safe and legal abortion.

In the post-2015 development framework:

- All governments should support making safe, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including legal abortion, accessible to all women;
- All governments should support repealing, not just reviewing, punitive abortion laws that discriminate against women and put their health and lives at risk;
- And all governments should affirm that sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights which should be respected, protected, and fulfilled by states.

The 48th session of the Commission for Population and Development is an opportunity for us to advance the future we want for all women and girls worldwide in the post-2015 framework. Women's and girls' autonomy to make informed choices about their sexuality, health, lives, and dignity must be at the core of sustainable development – as a matter of reproductive justice, human rights and gender equality.