

**Speech by :Mr Peter Smith**

**The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children**

**CPD 47**

Mr. Chairman , distinguished delegates , NGO colleagues , ladies and gentlemen , thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I would like to talk about maternal mortality , which is a major area of interest for the ICPD.

A brief history will help us to understand this problem a little better. A miraculous decline in maternal mortality began in England after 1935. In 1945 the maternal mortality rate was half what it had been ten years earlier. By 1950 , it was half what it had been in 1945. This coincided with the introduction of Prontosil in 1936 , the first successful drug to treat for bacterial infection. Soon after this sulphamide was introduced, later on penicillin was available. There was better treatment for high blood pressure, and haemorrhage post and ante partum.. There was also an improvement in nutrition during this period. This amazing reduction in maternal mortality was well before the introduction of modern contraceptives ( 1960) and legal abortion ( 1968 ). The decline in maternal mortality , in England , after 1970 was nowhere near as steep as from 1935 to 1950. This same pattern was followed by all the developed nations.

I am pleased to observe that the World Health Organisation published a small paper on the definition of unsafe abortion in March 2014. They stated that “.. illegal abortion is not synonymous with unsafe abortion”. In the past the two terms were completely interchangeable.

Two countries with consistently the lowest maternal mortality in the world are Ireland and Malta, where abortion is currently illegal.

Since the Cairo conference I believe that too much money has been spent on contraception and the promotion of abortion. It is scandalous that over 340,000 women die each year from pregnancy related causes. We have known how to remedy this situation in the developed world since the 1950s. The answer is simple, better basic health care , better nutrition for mothers , emergency obstetric care , and skilled birth attendants.

Those promoting fertility decline and the legalisation of abortion should stop pretending that they are trying to reduce maternal mortality. We believe they just want to lower the number of births.

If in the developing world there was better basic health care we would have a safer outcome for mother and baby. Who knows what even the “ least of these little ones “ may one day contribute to the betterment of the world.



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