



Check against Delivery

**United Nations Commission on
Population and Development**

***Putting People First
ICPD @ 15:
Contribution to development goals***

Statement

by

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Madame Chair,

Members of the Commission,

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the opening of this forty-second session of the Commission on Population and Development.

I commend you, Madame Chair, and the members of your Bureau on your work to prepare this session. We at UNFPA look forward to working closely with you and with Member States and other partners on the important issues before the Commission.

I would also like to recognize the important collaboration that UNFPA has with the Population Division, and express appreciation to Director Hania Zlotnik and her team.

And I would like to welcome all the letters submitted to the Commission by non-governmental organizations and their unprecedented participation in the session this year. All of us at UNFPA appreciate and applaud your partnership and leadership. We can achieve concrete results when we unite for a common cause.

Madame Chair,

As we meet the world is seized with crisis. In a few days, leaders of the G20 countries, representing 80 per cent of the world's output, will meet in London. They will meet against the backdrop of the worst international economic crisis in generations. Countries worldwide are gripped with recession, marked by falling trade, reduced income, and rising unemployment. There is growing concern that the financial crisis will fuel political instability that will also spill across borders.

People everywhere are looking to leaders to put people first and fix what they perceive to be a broken and corrupt system. They are calling for a system that places the long-term well-being of the majority of the people over the short-term interests of a few.

Even before the financial crisis, the world was plagued with widespread poverty, inequality, conflict and a changing climate. There are growing cries for reform and renewal with a focus on economic growth that is sustainable, equitable and environmentally sound.

During the first eight years of this century, we have witnessed a dramatic scale-up of investments to improve the education and health of the world's poor. These investments raised school enrolment rates, narrowed the gender gap in education, brought life-saving drugs to people living with AIDS, expanded HIV prevention, delivered bed nets to prevent malaria, and improved child health through immunization.

The financial crisis is now threatening to wipe out this hard-won progress in improving health and reducing poverty. Relatively small reductions in financing could lead to a loss in momentum that could take decades to repair.

Yes, we face exceptionally challenging economic circumstances. But just as after the Second World War, visionary leaders laid the groundwork for 30 years of prosperity and growth, built on international economic cooperation, this crisis also presents us with an opportunity.

We have an opportunity to use the world's resources, technology and knowledge to put people first, especially those who are poor and marginalized, and lay the foundations for global partnership and economic, social and environmental recovery.

We can ensure that the ambition to eradicate extreme poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals is more than just a proclamation. We must ensure that it becomes what it should be—a priority, backed by the requisite resources.

Madame Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

The financial crisis requires a comprehensive response that promotes early recovery, that provides financial support to the poorest countries, and that reforms global rules and institutions. We need stronger regulations and a greening of the economy.

The many crises that we are witnessing today are a testimony of our interconnected world. The financial meltdown and the melting of polar ice caps, though seemingly unrelated, have ramifications that are felt around the globe.

Of all existing international agreements for development, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development is the most comprehensive in recognizing and addressing these complex connections. It puts people and human rights at the center and it clearly articulates the connections among many interrelated factors: human development, empowerment of women, health, population dynamics, economic growth, patterns of production and consumption, migration, refugees, and protection of the environment.

As we search for solutions to the multiple crises that confront our world, the Cairo consensus provides sensible recommendations and hope for our common future.

Fifteen years ago, delegates in Cairo envisioned a world where all persons enjoyed equal rights and opportunities, where discrimination and violence against women were no longer tolerated, where the great divide between rich and poor was narrowed, and where the natural resources on which all life depends were protected. They agreed that every person has the right to sexual and reproductive health.

At the core of the ICPD Programme of Action lies a singular objective: to put our world into greater balance and improve the lives of current and future generations. Given today's financial, food, energy and climate crises, the visionary agenda of the ICPD remains more relevant than ever. And yet we are far away from achieving its goals.

As the financial crisis unwinds, it threatens to push 200 million people back into poverty, and reverse efforts aimed at improving social welfare and achieving the MDGs. Therefore, now is the time to increase social investment and redouble efforts for the ICPD agenda by investing in the most vulnerable groups of this financial crisis—women, youth and migrants. This is particularly important for women, who already constitute the majority of the world's poor and bear the brunt of today's crises.

We will not eradicate extreme poverty, hunger and inequality, and achieve the other Millennium Development Goals, unless greater attention is paid to population issues and more resources are devoted to women's empowerment and reproductive health, including maternal healthcare and family planning. Now is the time to keep the promise to ensure universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

Madame Chair,

During the 15 years since the Cairo Conference, governments and communities around the world have made progress in carrying this agenda forward. Together we have learned valuable lessons.

We have learned that population, sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights and the empowerment of women are essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to poverty eradication, promoting gender equality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability.

We can now use population data to better inform policies and programmes and monitor the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The 2010 census round will provide the main source of data for monitoring and evaluating progress.

We have piloted many successful projects and we can now continue to expand the experiences to scale-up reproductive health services, improve women's health and achieve MDG5 to improve maternal health. We know the three critical interventions that are needed: family planning, skilled attendance at birth and emergency obstetric care.

If every woman had access to these reproductive health services, a woman would not die during pregnancy and childbirth each and every minute.

We are gaining valuable knowledge about what works in strengthening health systems. We can now apply this knowledge so that health systems can deliver to women when women are ready to deliver.

We have learned how to make development more effective. We support the development of national capacity and help strengthen national institutions and systems so progress can be sustained. We support national development and the full involvement of civil society.

We have learned to better support procurement, logistics and supply systems so that countries can attain reproductive health commodity security, and people have the medicines, contraceptives and condoms they need. We are making progress, systems are improving and 80 countries now have national budget lines for contraceptives.

We have learned that we need to do much more to end child marriage and reduce high rates of teenage pregnancy by expanding access to opportunities, livelihoods, health services, and education on sexuality.

We know that far greater investments are needed to tackle widespread discrimination and violence against girls and women. We can promote equal partnership between boys and girls and men and women based on mutual respect and shared decisions and responsibilities.

And we can now say with confidence that public health improves when interventions are integrated through primary healthcare for reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We continue to learn through working together, including through the International Health Partnership.

This year as we commemorate ICPD at 15, events are planned throughout the year to take stock of progress and plan the way forward and this especially important at the country level. These events also include regional meetings, a global NGO forum, technical meetings, an international parliamentary conference and a commemoration in the General Assembly. We are also hosting an online forum to foster conversations for a better world. More information can be found at the back of this room.

ICPD Financial Flows

Madame Chair,

While the resources devoted to population activities have increased over time, the overall funding is not sufficient to meet current needs and escalating costs.

In line with the ICPD call to review and update cost estimates, UNFPA did a revision taking into account both current needs and current costs to facilitate the achievement of the ICPD recommendations and the Millennium Development Goals. The new cost estimates are contained in the Secretary-General's report on ICPD resource flows that is before the Commission.

The main point that I would like to stress today is that the funding gap for reproductive health, especially family planning, needs to be urgently addressed to ensure progress. Donor assistance for family planning as a percentage of all population assistance has decreased from 55 per cent in 1995, totaling \$723 million, to a mere 5 per cent in 2007 totaling only \$338 million.

If not reversed, the low funding for international family planning threatens to derail our collective efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and especially the target under MDG5 on universal access to reproductive health.

Today, there are 200 million women in the developing world with unmet need for effective contraception and the highest unmet need is in Africa. Now is the time to re-energize voluntary family planning. There is no investment in development that costs so little and brings benefits that are so far-reaching and enormous.

Access to safe, effective contraception reduces maternal and child mortality, provides women and girls the autonomy to determine the number and spacing of their children, enables educational and livelihood opportunities, and allows families to manage scarce resources more effectively and escape from poverty. Voluntary family planning also slows population growth and thereby allows governments to plan better and increase per-capita investment in social expenditures, particularly in education and health.

Today I call on all governments to increase resources for reproductive health, including family planning, so we can make greater progress for women and families. There is no smarter investment, with such high economic and social returns, than investing in the health and rights of adolescent girls and women.

I also call on countries to increase investments in all areas of the ICPD population package, including data collection, analysis and its use for development planning and monitoring.

Today many less developed countries cannot mobilize sufficient resources to fund their own national population, gender and reproductive health programmes. We see this clearly as countries embark on the 2010 round of censuses, which is threatened by lack of financing.

I make this call knowing well that the world is facing a serious financial crisis, but I make the call because we have all committed ourselves to protect the gains achieved and to ensure that the social sector is not impacted by this crisis.

Madame Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is time to renew our commitment to the cost-effective and visionary ICPD agenda.

This year, as we mark the 15th anniversary of the Cairo Conference on population and development, let us be bold, proactive and take concrete action. With only five years left in the countdown to 2015 for the achievement of both the ICPD goals as well as the MDGs, we must act with urgency to put people first so they can enjoy their rights and live free of want and poverty.

I thank you.