



United Kingdom Mission
to the United Nations

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza
(885 Second Avenue)
New York, NY 10017

Tel: +1 (212) 745 9200
Fax: +1 (212) 745 9316

Email: uk@un.int
http://twitter.com/UKUN_NewYork

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT BY H.E. LYNNE FEATHERSTONE, MINISTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

7 April 2014

Check against delivery

Thank you, Chair.

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here with you all to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of this agreement.

The ICPD programme of action was vital in embodying international consensus that population is about people, not numbers.

And in doing so it recognised that the only way to achieve sustainable development is through upholding, and respecting, the human rights of individuals.

As we have heard, twenty years on, we have made remarkable progress: fewer women now die giving birth, gender parity in primary education has improved, and extreme poverty has decreased.

However, we cannot afford to be complacent.

The ICPD recognised that sustainable development cannot be achieved if half of the global population is left behind, and this review shows we are still some way from achieving gender equality.

Investing in the health of women and girls is at the foundation of their empowerment.

That is why the UK supports Cairo's vision of a world where all women have choice over the size and timing of their families, where no woman dies giving birth, where all newborns survive and thrive, and where there are zero new HIV infections.

Our international work focuses on enabling women to have voice, choice and control.

There is still too much resistance to the simple notion that women and girls have the right to decide what happens to their own bodies.

We need to break this assumption that others somehow have the right to decide on the bodily integrity of individuals.

Just as we do not expect decisions to be made on our behalf in other aspects of our lives, neither should this be the case when it comes to the health of women and young people.

We are committed to working with all partners to enhance sexual and reproductive health and rights, and this means for all.

Individuals should be able to access information, services and supplies on the basis of need, regardless of their age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics.

Intolerance breeds intolerance, and just as gender should not be a basis for discrimination, neither should sexual orientation.

This review presents the shocking evidence of the scores of women still dying from complications arising from unsafe abortion and we have to address this problem.

This is a question of preventing women and girls from injury and death when they resort to unsafe abortion, rather than entering into a debate on the rights and wrongs of abortion.

We are committed to eliminating practices such as child, early and forced marriage and we are supporting the Africa-led movement to end Female Genital Mutilation.

These are practices which harm women and girls and prevent them from fulfilling their potential.

As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Cairo, the UK remains determined to uphold the values agreed to by the international community in 1994, while recognising the world has changed significantly over the past twenty years.

Subsequent reviews, including during this important year, allow us to reflect and respond to the changing international context.

This review enables us to consider where we have been less successful in implementation, as well as identifying those areas which may not have been sufficiently addressed in 1994 – including the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights and addressing intolerant attitudes – which continue to inhibit sustainable development.

The twentieth anniversary of ICPD provides us with a unique opportunity to change the lives of populations the world over.

We cannot afford to ignore evidence, even if that evidence presents uncomfortable truths.

Over the coming week and months, we need to take our responsibility seriously, and be unafraid and ambitious in advancing the ICPD, in order to truly realise the vision of Cairo for all.

We cannot afford to take another twenty years to make this happen.