



**United Nations General Assembly High-Level Plenary  
Commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the  
International Conference on Population and Development**

**Statement by  
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(5 min)**

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United Nations Headquarters, New York*

Your Excellency President of the General Assembly  
Your Excellency Mr. Secretary-General  
Assistant Secretary-General, UN DESA  
Excellencies  
Civil society partners  
Young people, colleagues and friends

It is an honour for UNFPA to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in this General Assembly session.

The adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action in Egypt in 1994 transformed the discourse on sustainable development with a vision and values that anticipated the vision and values of today's 2030 Agenda.

The Cairo Programme of Action boldly asserts that with development, including access to education and health care, and specifically, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, individuals and couples will choose the timing, spacing and number of children best for them; women and girls will be empowered; and all of society will benefit.

Government delegates from 179 countries, public health leaders, women's rights activists, youth leaders, people from all regions, cultures and walks of life affirmed this inspiring, forward-looking vision, and pledged to remove barriers that keep women and girls from their full potential. We said that reproductive rights are crucial to the cycle of life and to women's power to chart their own futures.

Since then, maternal mortality has dropped by nearly half – just one of many achievements.

However, despite considerable gains, too many women and girls are still waiting for all that Cairo promised.

Must 830 women die every day from complications in pregnancy and childbirth? No.

How much longer will hundreds of millions of women and adolescent girls have to wait for modern contraception?

Why do we tolerate tens of thousands of girls being married off every day and harmful practices like female genital mutilation?

Our hearts cry out for the families of 2.6 million stillborn babies each year.

As the then Executive Director of UNFPA, the great Dr. Nafis Sadik stated: These statistics are not just numbers; they are people.

And they are stories – stories of women and girls, men and boys, people everywhere, whose rights and potential are denied.

Stories of indigenous, rural and marginalized communities; of Afro-descendants; of those living with disabilities, or with HIV; of young people; of refugees, of all who face barriers to life-saving services and information.

Excellencies,

It is in our power to end these stories of injustice and inequality.

Thankfully, in April the Commission on Population and Development reaffirmed the ICPD Programme of Action. All nations declared that its full and effective implementation is part and parcel of the 2030 Agenda. UNFPA stands tall in agreement: There can be no SDGs without ICPD.

In over 150 countries, UNFPA works in partnership to deliver on that world that was promised 25 years ago. Through your advocacy, your determination and your relentless support, we will be certain to realize this transformative vision at last:

- zero unmet need for family planning;
- zero preventable maternal deaths; and
- zero gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

All based on a solid foundation of high-quality data to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Excellencies, Distinguished Friends,

For the past 50 years and certainly in the 25 years since Cairo, UNFPA has been there, unwavering, every step of the way. With your support, we ensure that women can exercise their right to make their own decisions over their lives and their bodies. May I pay tribute to those whose work we build upon: champions for the ICPD Programme of Action around the world!

We thank Member States for your leadership and partnership, and with civil society, the thousands of dedicated staff of UNFPA look forward to continuing to work shoulder to shoulder with you to complete the unfinished business of the ICPD.

This year, the road from Cairo leads to Nairobi for the ICPD25 Summit in November. Co-convened by the Governments of Kenya and Denmark together with UNFPA, the Summit will mobilize political and financial commitments – from governments, communities, financial institutions, private companies and individuals, all of us – to fully and finally deliver on the promise of Cairo.

It will take resources. It will take courage. It will take conviction. It means listening to women's demands. It's about rights and choices.

Meeting the need for family planning in priority countries by 2030 will cost in the range of \$40 billion US dollars. It's not an unreasonable choice – 3 aircraft carriers versus zero unmet need for family planning.

Millions upon millions of women and girls are counting on all of us to make the right choice.

UNFPA will continue to stand tall. We will not give up and will always choose the lives, rights and choices of women, girls and young people.

Let us resolutely move forward together, with courage, conviction and commitment. Onward to Nairobi. Onward to 2030. And onward to the world of rights and choices for all that lies ahead.