

**Statement by the United States at the
48th UN Commission on Population and Development**

Delivered by:

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Thank you, Madame Chair. I'd like to begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the CPD 48 bureau, the UN Population Division, and UNFPA for their efforts to prepare us for this year's Commission. The Secretary General's reports clearly show the central role that population dynamics play in sustainable development and will certainly inform our deliberations this week as well as our ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development framework.

We know that economic growth and prosperity, peace and security, and sustainable development are all advanced when human rights, particularly those of women and girls, are respected, protected, and promoted. They are advanced when we elevate the status of women and girls worldwide. This is why President Obama has placed women, girls, and gender equality at the heart of his global health agenda and has shown strong support for sexual and reproductive health, including voluntary family planning, and reproductive rights.

Some examples of this commitment include:

- The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief – or PEPFAR – which has a comprehensive approach to addressing gender and HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care, including the DREAMS Partnership, a \$210 million effort to significantly reduce new HIV infections in adolescent girls and young women in up to 10 countries using a core package of evidence based interventions;
- Increased support for USAID's family planning programs, which operate in over 40 countries and enable women and couples to make voluntary, informed decisions about the number, timing and spacing of their children. The percent of married women using contraception has increased from 12 percent in 1990 to more than 31 percent today in the countries with the largest USAID-supported programs ; and

- Providing over \$250 million in core funding since 2009 to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) to support reproductive and maternal health services and address gender-based violence.

Despite our collective work, women and girls around the world continue to face profound inequalities in every area of life, in every country. Ensuring that women and girls can participate on an equal footing with men and boys would be among the most transformative goals we could set for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This is why the United States has long advocated for a dedicated goal within the Post-2015 Development Agenda on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. We continue to focus on the prevention and response to gender-based violence, advancing women's economic empowerment, promoting women's public and private leadership, and improving universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and promoting women's reproductive rights. The United States also sees the Financing for Development conference in Addis this July as a key moment to reinforce our commitment to achieving gender equality, and a successful outcome in Addis must strongly reflect gender as a priority issue.

We also know that enabling women to determine whether, when, and how often to have children is crucial to safe motherhood and healthy families. Increasing access to reproductive health services, including voluntary family planning, has profound health, economic, and social benefits. It reduces maternal and child death and disability, reduces recourse to abortion, and empowers women and girls by creating opportunities for education, employment, and full participation in society.

In addition to advocating for a stand-alone gender goal, the U.S. has been vocal in its support for a dedicated health goal. We support accelerating progress on the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which includes our continuing commitment to ending preventable child and maternal deaths as well as creating an AIDS-free generation.

We have made tremendous headway but we also know that much work remains – particularly in achieving MDG 5, where the least progress has been made. Nearly 800 women continue to die each day during pregnancy and childbirth. And, by the close of 2015, more than 877 million women of reproductive age living in developing countries will desire to delay, space, or limit childbearing. Among them, 652 million—the highest number ever—will be using modern contraceptives. Still, 225 million women—a number virtually unchanged since 2008 due to population growth—will not have access to family planning, resulting every year in 70,000 maternal and half a million newborn deaths.

We must also remain steadfast in our commitment to address the needs and rights of adolescents and young people, who represent a significant proportion of the world's population. In order to reach their full potential, they need access to health, education, and employment opportunities. We must also ensure that youth can participate in discussions and decisions on issues that affect not only their own lives and futures but will, ultimately, set the course of global health and population growth for generations to come.

And finally, my delegation would be remiss not to mention the importance of working with Governments to improve the collection and analysis of demographic data, including vital statistics, for aggregation and review at regional and global levels. We must also strengthen the capacity of civil society to participate in the collection, analysis, and application of population data at all levels. This will be critical in designing and implementing a Post-2015 development agenda that is evidence-based, realistic, and meets the needs of current and future generations. We further believe that measuring progress for women and girls requires the collection of sex and age disaggregated data across all goals and targets.

Madame Chair, in conclusion, we can, this week, re-commit to working in partnership to reach our common goals -- acknowledging the direct link between population and the ability to reach sustainable development outcomes. We know that enlightened policies on sexual and reproductive health and effective programs on the ground are a matter of life and death for so many women and young people. It's clear we need strong global leadership to continue making progress. The work of this Commission and the shared aspirations of its members to support the Cairo agenda beyond 2014 can have a profound impact as we work together to forge a meaningful sustainable development agenda.

Thank you.