



Check against Delivery

Commission on the Status of Women

*Getting Down to Business:
Accelerating Implementation of the
Beijing and Cairo agreements*

Statement

by

**Thoraya Ahmed Obaid
Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund**

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Thank you very much Madame Chairperson.

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women as we mark the 10-year review of the historic Beijing Conference and Platform for Action.

Ten years ago in Beijing, world leaders agreed that progress for all depends on progress for women and girls. They agreed that none of the world's most pressing problems could be solved without the full and equal participation of women. They agreed that economic growth depended on social investment and that there was no better investment than the education, health and empowerment of women and girls. And they agreed that the full human rights and human dignity of girls and women must be promoted and protected, once and for all.

Your adoption by consensus of the Declaration on Friday, in which you reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and its important link with the achievement of the MDGs, is an important milestone. It follows the reaffirmation by all regions of the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action.

The Cairo and Beijing agendas are intrinsically linked. Both have human rights as their framework and gender equity and equality as their focus.

The full implementation of the agreements of the UN Conferences of the 1990s, for which many of you worked so hard, is necessary for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

During the past decade, we have taken many important steps forward. Progress has been made in strengthening national policy and legal frameworks for women's human rights. For this, much credit goes to those who worked to bring to life the spirit of Beijing, Cairo and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As the international legal standard for women's rights, CEDAW and its Optional Protocol must be implemented.

Ten years after Beijing, there are many success stories in all regions of the world, which give us cause for celebration and hope. Yet, we still have a long way to go before we fully achieve the goals of Cairo and Beijing and the Millennium Declaration.

My friends,

We are at a critical juncture. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed at the opening of this session, among the key actions needed, we must guarantee the right to sexual and reproductive health. This is not merely a health issue, it is a matter of social justice, basic human rights, and sustainable human development.

We all know the figures. Every minute, one woman dies from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Each minute, ten people are newly infected with HIV/AIDS, which is striking harder and harder at women and adolescent girls. This does not have to be the reality; we know what needs to be done.

The Millennium Project has identified 17 quick wins and one of them is to "expand access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and contraceptive information and services, and close funding gaps for supplies and logistics." We cannot raise the awareness and hopes of women of their right to plan their families or protect themselves from HIV infection, unless we also give them the supplies and tools they need.

As we recommit ourselves to the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, I am sure that reproductive health will be a priority in your national programmes, whether in health, in education or the empowerment of women. I am also sure that each one of you will strive to ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to the achievement of the outcomes of the two conferences and their five and ten year reviews.

When the world's leaders gather here in September to review progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration, I hope that our collective work to advocate for universal access to reproductive health by the year 2015 is recognized as vital for the achievement of all MDGs. We will not be able to eradicate extreme poverty, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, unless greater priority and resources are devoted to reproductive health.

Access to sexual and reproductive health services improves the overall health of individuals and families, spurs economic growth, and contributes to gender equality, social inclusion and the achievement of human rights. Needless to say, reproductive health and rights are central to the fulfillment of some of the basic human desires, for rich and poor alike.

My friends, we are on a journey—a journey for equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity. I focus on women here because we all know quite well that when women prosper so does the society as a whole.

The challenge we face in 2005 and beyond is to turn these lofty words into deeds. To do this, we need stronger political commitment and partnerships, increased resources, greater capacity, and accountability.

We need political leaders who fully represent the interests of women and all members of their populations, especially the most disadvantaged. We need leaders who will work together and build alliances with parliamentarians and civil society and the United Nations to implement the vision and goals of the Cairo and Beijing conferences.

We need to **scale up** our responses. We cannot go along with projects here and there. We must cast our net more widely to reach the poorest and most isolated within the context of national health and education systems. We must work together to build capacity; to improve health and education systems; to train, update and keep health workers and teachers; and to build solid legal and justice systems.

There are many opportunities now to do so, especially with more and more support to developing countries coming in the form of budget support, funding through poverty reduction strategies, sector-wide approaches and increased debt forgiveness, especially for the highly indebted countries.

Each one of you must ensure that the empowerment of women is high on the national agenda and central to the national dialogues. Only through such elevation of the issue on the ladder of priorities will resources be made available not to individual projects but to comprehensive programmes that allow the scaling up of responses in a multi-sectoral approach. We should hold ourselves accountable to achieve this critical financial and programmatic goal.

We must **increase financial, human and institutional resources** for women's empowerment, education and health, and gender equality. Nationally, countries need to make the necessary allocations in their budgets to turn their commitments and policies into concrete programmes and services. Internationally, reaching the agreed level of 0.7% GNP to official development assistance, and increased debt forgiveness will benefit the poorest countries, and enable them to move forward faster.

And finally, we must **ensure accountability**. Who should be held accountable for the high rates of HIV infection and maternal mortality? Who should be held accountable for violence against women and girls? Who should be accountable for the gap in girls' education? We need monitoring systems, gender-sensitive indicators and specific targets put in place so that we can measure our performance and hold ourselves and others accountable.

UNFPA is committed to progress in all of these areas and we are committed to working with all of you and your partners back home to move forward faster. Thank you very much.