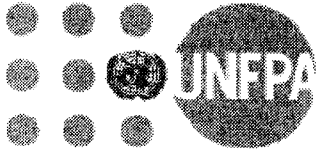


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## **Commission on the Status of Women**

**Cairo @ 15  
Beijing @ 15**

**International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 1994  
Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995**

**Statement  
by**

**Purnima Mane  
Deputy Executive Director, Programme  
United Nations Population Fund**

**4 March 2009  
New York**

Mr. Chairman,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

Today I would like to speak about where we stand 15 years after the International Conference on Population and Development and nearly 15 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women.

These two landmark agreements play independent and mutually reinforcing roles in advancing international standards for the rights and health of all women.

The Cairo Conference took the lead in focusing on reproductive health and reproductive rights, education and women's empowerment as necessary to achieve social and economic progress and sustainable development.

The Beijing Conference brought all rights of women to the forefront to promote overall equality, development and peace.

Both the Cairo and Beijing agendas make concrete recommendations that would bring us greater progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals as we approach 2015.

Both conferences focus on gender equality, the importance of women's empowerment, the participation of men and boys and the acceptance of equitable roles as essential elements for progress for all.

Both the Cairo and Beijing conferences affirm the right of women to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health.

Fifteen years later, now is the time to ensure universal access to reproductive health so that every pregnancy is wanted and every birth is safe.

Mr. Chairman,

Protecting women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is essential to women's empowerment and gender equality and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

Advancing the right to sexual and reproductive health is crucial for eliminating extreme poverty, combating AIDS, and improving maternal health.

Today I would also like to highlight two issues that demand our urgent attention: The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and the urgent need to unite to end violence against women and girls.

In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work—often unpaid and unrecognized, being confronted with violence—both physical and sexual, and their lack of power and influence in decision-making.

As champions of women's rights, we can no longer allow women to bear the biggest share of poverty when they do the most work and reap the least benefits.

We can no longer allow negative attitudes towards women and girls to persist that threaten their confidence and aspirations.

We can no longer allow women to suffer violence and carry the blame while the offenders go free.

We can no longer allow another woman to die every minute from complications of pregnancy and childbirth when proven life-saving interventions exist. No woman should die giving life.

We can no longer allow women's unpaid work, which makes a vital contribution to the economy and the community, to remain undervalued and invisible.

Let us work together to create a world where the labels of 'women's work' and 'men's work' are no longer recognized or reinforced.

Let us work together to create a world where women and men enjoy equal opportunity and equal rights, and equal partnership and equal responsibilities in their productive and reproductive lives.

Let us work together to end violence against women and girls.

Our challenge now is to translate words into action to ensure accountability, to end impunity and strengthen the rule of law. We need to work with communities to build a culture of equality, mutual respect and shared responsibility between women and men, girls and boys.

We know that none of the world's problems can be solved without the full and equal participation of women. From farming fields to formulating policy, from caregiving to consolidating peace and security, from providing for their families to providing leadership in government, women have a valuable, dynamic and constructive role to play in the domestic, national and global arenas.

At UNFPA, we have learned from 40 years of experience that we can accomplish great things when we join hands and work together. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you for women's empowerment, gender equality and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you.