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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

**Eradication of poverty and other development issues:
women in development**

Advancement of women

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 16 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Last year we commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Conference adopted the Programme of Action. At the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo the international community reached consensus on three quantitative goals to be achieved by 2015: the reduction of infant, child and maternal mortality; the provision of universal access to education, particularly for girls; and the provision of universal access to a full range of reproductive health-care and family planning services.

Only five years remain to 2015. It is clear that of all the Millennium Development Goals, Goal 5 (improving maternal health) is lagging behind most. The world will fall well short of the target related to maternal mortality at the present rate of progress. The data suggests that to reach the target, the global maternal mortality ratio would have had to be reduced by an average 5.5 per cent per year between 1990 and 2015. The current average rate of reduction is less than 1 per cent per year.

Closing the implementation gap will only happen if concerted action is taken in the five years remaining to 2015. This is why the Netherlands, together with the United Nations Population Fund, took the initiative to organize the High-level Meeting on Maternal Health. This important meeting took place on 26 October 2009 in the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa. The participants adopted the "Addis Call to Urgent Action for Maternal Health" (see annex).



In September of this year world leaders will gather in New York for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess successes, best practices, lessons learned, obstacles, gaps, challenges and opportunities in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The “Addis Call to Urgent Action for Maternal Health” is an important contribution to the preparatory process. I would therefore be grateful if it and the present letter could be distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 48, 57 (b), 62 (a) and 114.

(Signed) Herman **Schaper**

Annex to the letter dated 16 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Addis Call to Urgent Action for Maternal Health

Adopted at the High Level Meeting for Maternal Health – 26th October 2009 – Millennium Development Goal 5, in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

Maternal death and disability is one of the greatest moral, human rights and development challenges of our time and is the world's largest health inequity.

Ending the needless death and suffering of women from complications of pregnancy and childbirth and achieving MDG5 to improve maternal health will only happen if concerted action is taken in the remaining five years to 2015 to protect and fulfill everyone's right to sexual and reproductive health. Together with the right comes the responsibility of men and boys to contribute to reduce gender inequalities and combat gender-based violence. Investing in the health and rights of women and girls is smart economics for families, communities and nations, especially during the financial crisis. This requires key measures to:

1. Prioritize family planning, one of the most cost-effective development investments.

If we ensure access to modern contraception, we can prevent up to 40% of maternal deaths.

2. Make adolescents a priority.

If we invest in adolescent health, education and livelihoods, we will accelerate progress.

3. Strengthen health systems with sexual and reproductive health as a priority.

If a health system can deliver for women, it is a strong health system that benefits all.

We, participants at the High-level Meeting on Maternal Health in Addis Ababa on 26 October 2009, as representatives of government, civil society, the private sector and youth, have the collective means to save women from preventable death and disability. Propelled by the 2015 deadline of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals, we commit to urgent action, and call on all:

Presidents and Ministers:

- To ensure that by the end of 2010, national and district health plans prioritize sexual and reproductive health, including maternal and newborn health, nutrition, family planning, STI/HIV prevention, and reproductive cancers; and make plans, budgets and results public to promote monitoring, transparency and accountability.
- Allocate needed resources to implement health and education plans and policies and institute gender budgeting.
- Integrate MDG5 target 5b on universal access to reproductive health into national development plans and budgets and report on implementation and results as part of national MDG reports for 2010. Family planning is an investment, not an expenditure.

Presidents and Ministers:

- Ensure that health systems are gender and culturally sensitive, community-oriented, and create demand to provide effective:
 - comprehensive voluntary family planning;
 - skilled and quality care during and after pregnancy and childbirth, including antenatal care, emergency obstetric care, postnatal care and essential newborn care;
 - safe abortion - consistent with the ICPD Programme of Action and the ICPD+5 Key Actions - and post abortion care;
 - skilled and motivated health workers in the right place at the right time and managers with necessary training and capacity to provide health services;
 - necessary infrastructure, drugs, equipment and regulations.
- Provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, education, information, services and supplies, including female and male condoms as well as emergency contraception, with the full involvement of young people.
- Invest in health, education, literacy and livelihoods of youth and women to empower them and build human capital for economic and social development.
- Address as a matter of urgency the high number of deaths from unsafe abortion and ensure access to safe abortion, consistent with the ICPD Programme of Action and the ICPD+5 Key Actions.
- Enact and enforce laws and policies on the minimum age of marriage at 18, respecting girls' human rights and preventing risks associated with child marriage and adolescent pregnancies.
- In conflict situations, ensure equity and neutrality in providing sexual and reproductive health services.

Parliamentarians:

- Use your position as an elected leader to break the silence, foster dialogue and mobilize your constituents to promote gender equality, and the right to sexual and reproductive health.
- Strengthen parliamentary capacity for oversight and budget analysis, particularly gender budgeting, to increase accountability and achieve MDG5.
- Increase budget allocations for reproductive health services and supplies, including voluntary family planning, and ensure that resources are equitably distributed to reach marginalized populations as vital to achieving development and poverty reduction goals.
- Hold parliamentary hearings with experts and civil society to increase awareness of benefits and barriers to effective access and utilization of sexual and reproductive health services.
- Organize discussions with young people to help shape reproductive health and rights policies and laws that address young people's needs, and remove restrictive laws.
- Promote and strengthen partnerships with other parliamentarians, donors, NGOs and the private sector to leverage human and financial resources to achieve MDG5.

Development Partners and Donors:

- Provide predictable, long-term additional resources from now to 2015 to achieve MDG5 and advance the ICPD Programme of Action, including through new innovative financing mechanisms.
- Fulfill the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance (ODA) and mobilize the additional resources needed to achieve MDG5 - an additional \$10 billion annually.
- Place MDG5 at the centre of global health initiatives and funding mechanisms, including the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the GAVI Alliance, the International Health Partnership+, the Task Force on Innovative Financing for Health Systems Strengthening, and UNITAID.
- Improve transparency and accountability by making program and financial information public.
- Make full use of the target on universal access to reproductive health within the MDG framework to mainstream reproductive health into all development and poverty reduction plans.
- Harmonize, align and coordinate resources behind robust national health plans for a more effective use of domestic and external resources, maximizing management for results and mutual accountability.
- Provide support to countries to accelerate the achievement of MDG5, as UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and World Bank, working as H4, and other partners have agreed.

Civil Society:

- Share best practices and lessons learned to create a strong policy community to galvanize political resolve and counter opposition to advance the ICPD agenda and achieve MDG5.
- Identify strategic partners outside of traditional advocates to build political commitment and alliances to reduce inequities and ensure universal access to reproductive health by 2015.
- Create an evidence-informed campaign to highlight MDG5 as the mother of all MDGs and advocate for increased domestic and international funding for sexual and reproductive health.
- Mobilize communities to demand responsive health systems and quality services and to hold governments accountable for their commitments.

Civil Society:

- Work to complement government efforts by providing services, education and information through NGOs and community-based providers, especially to reach the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized women and young people.
- Gather and use evidence-based information to develop adolescent and youth programmes to reflect the diversity of young people's needs according to their age, sex, education, living arrangements, and marital status.
- Health professional associations to work with governments on policies, norms, standards and strategies to ensure provision of quality sexual and reproductive health services and the recruitment and retention of skilled health care workers within countries.

Young people:

- Expand countrywide youth networks to ensure participation and representation, especially the marginalized, in policy dialogues to advance the right to education, safe school environments, adequate standard of living, and sexual and reproductive health.
- Speak out about the lack of access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services that results in a disproportionate death and suffering caused by unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality, and HIV infection.
- Foster discussion on healthy, equitable and mutually respectful relationships and ensure your peers are aware of their right to sexual and reproductive health.

Private Sector:

- Implement workplace policies and reproductive health services including family planning to improve maternal health and ensure a healthy and productive workforce through health insurance, parental leave and flexible work schedules, including for breastfeeding.
- Partner with governments and civil society to strengthen health systems for sexual and reproductive health, as a corporate social responsibility and win-win strategy.
- Share your expertise in management, marketing, logistics and research to expand services and supplies for maternal health, family planning and HIV prevention programmes.
- Use your leadership and stature to promote the health and rights of women and girls as a vital investment to improve economic growth, equity and stability.
- Use innovation and new technology to achieve MDG5 to improve maternal health.

***We commit to urgent action and call on all to carry out these actions and monitor progress made.
MDG5 is achievable!***