

**Statement at the Opening Plenary  
by Scott Radloff, Director of the Office of Population and Reproductive Health**

**Family Planning, Family Health, Family Wealth  
International Conference on Family Planning: Research and Best Practices  
Kampala, Uganda, November 15-18, 2009**

2009 is a pivotal year for family planning and reproductive health. It is the year we take stock of progress in meeting the goals of ICPD. In a few short months, we will be taking stock of where we are in meeting the MDGs, including MDG 5b on universal access to reproductive health services and reducing unmet need for family planning.

For both ICPD and MDG goals, we have roughly 5 years to go. And while we have made progress, much remains to be done. We are not halfway there in reaching the goals. In many countries, we are not yet one-quarter of the way there.

But I am optimistic about the possibilities of making real progress over the next 5 years. Speaking on behalf of the Obama Administration, we have a unique opportunity to make progress that we have not had for some time. Family planning is a priority for the Obama Administration. This was signaled in the President's first week in office when he rescinded the Mexico City Policy. At that time he noted the "reducing unintended pregnancy" would be a priority for his Administration both domestically and internationally.

Let me quote from the President's statements that week:

"We are united in our determination to prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the need for abortion, and support women and families in the choices they make. To accomplish these goals, we much work to find common ground to expand access to affordable contraception, accurate health information, and preventative services...we must also recommit ourselves more broadly to assuring that our daughters have the same rights and opportunities as our sons: the chance to attain a world-class education; to have fulfilling careers in any industry; to be treated fairly and paid equally for their work; and to have no limits on their dreams. That is what I want for women everywhere."

He went on to say:

"For too long, international family planning assistance has been used as a political wedge issue, the subject of a back and forth debate that has served only to divide us. I have no desire to continue this stale and fruitless debate. It is time that we end the politicization of this issue...my Administration will initiate a fresh conversation on family planning, working to find areas of common ground to best meet the needs of women and families at home and around the world."

We have a true champion in President Obama. We also have a true champion in Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who is also strongly committed to family planning, reproductive health, and broader women's issues. Earlier this year, in speaking of family planning, she said:

"Keeping women and men in ignorance and denied the access to services actually increases the rate of abortion...we are now an administration that will protect the rights of women, including their rights to reproductive health care."

The priority the Administration places on family planning was reinforced by a number of actions taken this year:

- The decision to refund UNFPA
- The request for increased resources for international family planning
- The affirmation of US government support for ICPD and MDG goals
- And, the inclusion of family planning under the President's "Global Health Initiative" as a priority alongside HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria and, importantly, alongside maternal and child health where there are important synergies to build on.

All of these actions point to the US government's re-establishing leadership on family planning and reproductive health, placing emphasis on re-engaging with donor and country partners in a constructive way in advancing programs that increase access to family planning.

This is good news for women and families in countries around the world. We know that when women are given the freedom to make reproductive choices, good things happen:

- Good things happen for women – for women's health, for women's opportunities, for women's well-being.
- Good things happen for the family – for child health, for the child's education, for family prosperity.
- Good things happen for the community – enhancing the ability to provide health, education, and social services.
- And good things happen for the nation – for its economy, for its environment, and for its stability.

I am optimistic about the future because I see increased commitment and resolve to address family planning needs at an international level and at the country level. I see increased resources for these programs – not just from the US government, but from other donors and countries themselves.

And I am optimistic because we have the know-how of how to effectively increase access to family planning information and services. We have a solid evidence-base and a set of best practices upon which to build; which of course is what this conference is all about.

I thank the Gates Institute for sponsoring this conference – and all of the partner organizations for making this conference a reality. I thank the first lady of Uganda for Uganda's hosting of this conference and for her taking the time to be with us today to open the conference. And I thank all of you here, more than 1,000 strong, for participating in this conference.

Indeed, this is a pivotal year for family planning and reproductive health. We have the chance to make real progress in the next five years by joining together in partnership to improve the health and wealth of women, families, communities, and nations. So let us join together to make the most of this opportunity that lies before us.

Thank you.