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International family planning meeting opens in Uganda

KAMPALA, Nov 15, 2009 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- An international meeting focusing on research and best practices in family planning opened here on Sunday, which is seen as a crucial factor in achieving United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for developing countries.

Janet Museveni, Uganda's First Lady, said while opening the conference at Munyonyo Commonwealth resort located in the Kampala suburb that the increasing number of maternal and infant death was affecting the economic development on many countries.

"Globally we lose over 15 billion U.S. dollars per year in terms of women productivity as a result of maternal morbidity and mortality," she told the over 1,300 delegates from 59 countries across the globe.

"Persistent high maternal and infant mortality and morbidity rate continues to be a major concern especially in our developing countries," she said.

The four-day meeting organized by the Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Uganda's Makerere University's School of Public Health among others, will share new research and experiences in family planning.

Stephen Mallinga, Uganda's Health Minister noted that the rapid population growth in developing countries is becoming a heavy burden for governments of developing countries, taking their meager resources on providing social and health services.


"The consequences of a rapid population growth on our governments will not fare well with the economic and development efforts," he said.

Michael Klag, Dean of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health said that family planning should get on top of the global health agenda if poverty is to be fought effectively.

According to the experts, family planning is essential in achieving three of the MDGs which include reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and promoting gender equality.

Family planning also helps in the achievement of the goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and combating HIV/AIDS.

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