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G8 ACTION URGED TO AVERT SIX MILLION MOTHER AND CHILD DEATHS EVERY YEAR

"It would cost the world less than two-and-a-half-day's worth of military spending to save the lives of 6 million mothers, newborn and children every year.

We urge the G8 to step up funding and lead by example by saving and protecting lives."

We will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals unless reproductive health, and the rights women and children, are made a priority. "

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA

New York/Cape Town, 18 April 2008—The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health has called on G8 leaders to fulfil their previous commitments to global health and commit to new, long-term financing for essential interventions that could avert the deaths of over 6 million mothers, newborns and children every year.

The statement calls for an additional \$10.2 billion annually, the estimated cost to ensure universal coverage of basic services needed to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 on reducing child death and improving maternal health by 2015, respectively.

"The world is expecting G8 leaders to show the way in confronting this health crisis faced by millions of mothers and children who do not have access to essential care" said Jeffrey Mecaskey, a representative of the Save the Children Alliance. "The Countdown report gives us all the information we need. We can achieve MDGs 4 and 5, it's simply a question of making the right political choices.

The global call for funding was issued at a conference held in Cape Town, South Africa to discuss the implications of the 2008 report, Countdown to 2015: Tracking Progress in Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival, in advance of the G8 Summit to be hosted by the Government of Japan in July.

"Nigeria and other African nations are making genuine political commitments to reduce maternal and child mortality but we face substantial challenges and competing priorities" said the Honourable Saudatu Sani, a Parliamentarian from the Federal Republic of Nigeria participating in the Countdown conference. "I therefore call on G8 leaders to match our commitment by increasing donor support for strengthening health systems in Africa. This mutual engagement is critical to reach the MDGs."

The Partnership brings together more than 240 member organizations from around the world working on child survival and maternal health, and the statement addresses not just G8 nations, but all donor governments and business leaders. While donor funding for maternal, newborn and child health has increased significantly in the past few years, from \$2.1 billion in 2003 to

almost \$3.5 billion in 2006, it remains far below the total funding needs of the 68 countries identified as accounting for 97 per cent of maternal and child deaths worldwide.

According to the most recent data, donor aid for health averaged \$7 per child and \$12 per live birth in the 68 Countdown countries. This is far less than the \$45 per person, which is the minimum needed for governments to ensure access to basic health services. Long-term donor assistance is therefore critical to closing the gap. The statement also calls for a "reallocation of national resources to benefit women and children, especially in countries with significant economic prospects where resources can be mobilized".

"Japan has shown critical leadership in the past to improve health and human security in the world's poorer countries" noted Ann Starrs, President of Family Care International. "The Countdown to 2015 findings announced in Cape Town provide a clear blueprint for action. What we need now are political leadership and investment in services which save lives. G8 leaders must show the way at their 2008 Hokkaido Summit, but this is a long term undertaking requiring high level commitment from both North and South."

The 2000 Okinawa G8 Summit launched the Okinawa Infectious Diseases Initiative that led to the establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, which has since committed over US\$10 billion in 136 countries to help fight these diseases.

Contact information:

- Tunga Namjilsuren, The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, mobile: +41 79 477 26 78 , namjilsurent@who.int
- Katja Iversen, UNFPA, mobile: +1 917 403 3063, office: +1 212 297 5016, iversen@unfpa.org
- George Ngwa, UNFPA, mobile: +27 72 627 1032, ngwa@unfpa.org

Links:

- Global Call for G8 Leaders: http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/documents/global_call.doc
- Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health: <http://www.who.int/pmnch/en/>
- No Woman Should Die Giving Life: <http://www.unfpa.org/safemotherhood/>
- Stepping up Efforts to Save Mothers' Lives: <http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/index.htm>
- A Bumpy Ride Can Mean the Difference between Life and Death in Guatemala: <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=1053>

Note for editors:

Countdown to 2015 for Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival is collaboration among individuals and institutions to track coverage for health interventions needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 & 5. For more information, visit <http://www.countdown2015mnch.org>

Financial data on donor assistance is drawn from an article in The Lancet special issue on Countdown to 2015, Volume 371, April 12-18 2008: Countdown to 2015: assessment of donor assistance to maternal, newborn and child health between 2003 and 2006 G Greco and others.

The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health brings together more than 240 member organizations from around the world working towards Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5 on child survival and maternal health. For more information, visit: <http://www.who.int/pmnch>