



United Nations Population Fund

Statement on the Occasion of World Population Day 2008

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World Population Day

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The theme of this year's World Population Day, "Family Planning: It's a right, let's make it real" focuses attention on one of the rights and fundamental freedoms that applies to every person, everywhere. It calls us to reflect on the 1968 proclamation by world leaders of the right of individuals and couples to decide freely and responsibly, the number and spacing of their children.

Today's commemoration of World Population Day affords us an opportunity to recommit to ensuring that people everywhere understand this right and how it relates to them. And that steps are taken to ensure its protection and promotion.

Far too many persons and families are trapped in a condition of persistent poverty brought on in many cases by a lack of access to family planning information and services.

In the sub-region, the rapid spread of HIV, high rates of unwanted/ mistimed pregnancies, and maternal mortality, remind us that we have a long way to go if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). When a woman can plan her family, she can plan the rest of her life. She can plan to gain equality. Plan to beat maternal death. Plan to beat poverty.

We call on governments to take steps to honour the commitment made at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). At the Cairo Conference and in other International accords and conventions, nations agreed on the right to access information and services that would help individuals and couples make informed decisions regarding planning for their families. On this World Population Day, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, pledges its commitment to support health and equal opportunity for all people. UNFPA will continue to initiate and partner with stakeholders on actions that will help governments achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In the area of universal access to sexual and reproductive health, investments are being made to improve national forecasting and distribution systems for contraceptive and condom supplies. Women are being empowered to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health through an initiative aimed at building capacity to promote demand for, and use of condoms, particularly, female condoms. Men are being encouraged and supported to embrace their roles as partners in sexual and reproductive health. Young people are being trained in behaviour change communication as part of the effort to advance their right to plan for their family and future.

We urge all stakeholders to be encouraged by the gains made so far but to guard against complacency, for the mission is not accomplished until we fashion a world where everyone enjoys human dignity, access to health care/ services and equal opportunity.