



**Partners in Population and Development
A South-South Initiative**

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**Statement by
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The United Nations Population Fund and
The United Nations Office of Project Services
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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for giving me the floor to make a brief statement on behalf of Partners in Population and Development (PPD), at this First Regular Session 2013 of the UNFPA Executive Board. I would like to thank the UNFPA Executive Director for his substantive and comprehensive statement and updating the Board on a number of issues which are both important for the members of the Board and also bear strong organizational significance to UNFPA. I would like to share a few observations and information on some of the issues highlighted in the statement as well as on the thematic evaluation on UNFPA support to maternal health. I would also like to recognize the longstanding partnership between UNFPA and PPD in serving the member countries in some of these areas.

PPD acknowledges and appreciates the process and pace at which the follow up efforts are being pursued by UNFPA on the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review and also UNFPA's lead engagement in the area of 'Population Dynamics' as part of the undg consultative process of the post-2015 development agenda. PPD very much appreciates the substantive and evidence-based nature of the ICPD review process, and the spirit of inclusiveness and participation of all relevant stakeholders in the review. PPD also acknowledges UNFPA's efforts to promote South-South Partnership, which is one of PPD's key mandates. The executive Director's statement touched upon the issue of leveraging south-south and triangular partnership. We also noted that the ICPD review questionnaire and the process consultations do not reflect adequate emphasis on the South-South cooperation dimensions which was one of the areas highlighted in the ICPD Plan of Action. We hope that UNFPA would consider including this dimension in the final analysis of the review based on empirical data and evidence. We would recommend that UNFPA also considers evaluating its efforts to promote 'South to South Partnership' as one of its strategic direction.

PPD reiterates its full commitment to this process ICPD review and follow up, and while participating in it, stands ready for active and meaningful partnership with UNFPA in this effort. In this connection, I would also take this opportunity to draw your attention to a significant PPD initiative in this regard. To contribute to the process and take its commitment forward on post ICPD 2014, PPD, in partnership with the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh held an International Inter-Ministerial Conference from 10 -11 November 2012 with the theme "Evidence for Action: South-South Collaboration for ICPD beyond 2014" in Dhaka-Bangladesh. The conference was attended by over 130 participants comprised of high level policy makers consisted of one Vice-President, ten Ministers, five members of Parliament, Ambassadors, senior government officials, development partners, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, academia, research institutions, networks of youth and people living with HIV/AIDS, and the private sector. We note with appreciation UNFPA's contribution in the deliberations of the conference.

The International Inter-Ministerial Conference focused on sharing south-south evidence and challenges in the implementation of International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Plan of Action (PoA) and in the context of the MDGs. The conference outcome represents key commitments and recommendations for a re-invigorated implementation of the ICPD PoA beyond 2014 and post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, enshrined in the Dhaka Declaration that was adopted by the conference participants. PPD was further urged to support, facilitate and coordinate annual monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and achievements of the commitments contained in this Declaration. The Declaration was endorsed by the PPD board members and the Executive committee. As a follow up to the Dhaka meeting, the PPD Board agreed to hold the next interregional PPD consultative meeting to be hosted by the government of China in the last quarter of 2013. This, we believe, would be another contribution to move the consultative process forward on the agenda of ICPD beyond 2014 with a potential opportunity to work with UNFPA as partners.

Mr. President,

I let me now provide a few observations on the thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to maternal health. The theme is critically important and strategic for UNFPA and central to its mandate. It is commissioned at an opportune time as its lessons will hopefully inform its next strategic planning exercise as well as UNFPA strategy beyond ICPD 2014. The evaluation also has a global significance and relevance as maternal mortality represents the greatest health inequity in the world and as a health indicator it points to stark global disparities in human development. This evaluation provides a detailed substantiated analysis of support of UNFPA in maternal health and assesses its contribution to the objectives as set out in the Multi-Year Funding Frameworks (2000 to 2007) as well as the Sexual and Reproductive Health framework under the UNFPA Strategic Plan (2008-2013)

Overall the evaluation presents an objective and balanced picture of UNFPA contribution with supporting evidence. The evaluation design and the methodology applied in collecting and analyzing data represent a good mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches with excellent inclusiveness of stakeholders. The findings and more, specifically the conclusions, are balanced and quite bold in analyzing incisively not only the UNFPA strengths in this area but also the programmatic and organizational deficits of UNFPA interventions. One element that the report did not reflect adequately on is the wealth of rich and successful experiences in tackling maternal health issues in developing countries and the potential for utilizing South-South solutions through promoting and catalyzing south-south partnerships in maternal health.

The findings and conclusions of the evaluation are strategic in nature and if acted upon would provide a substantive basis for further improved organizational performance. Some of the conclusions points to some fundamental deficits in programme processes and organizational strength: for example UNFPA's maternal health support not being sufficiently based on country-specific medium or long-term strategies; support to maternal health not addressing the root causes of poor maternal health. On the organizational side, the conclusions point to some endemic limitations: for example the inability to use the comparative strength of the organization as a primary knowledge and evidence-based organization, insufficient staff capacity and gaps in

the skills available in country offices, lack of sufficient technical support to country offices from regional offices and Headquarters, and finally weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms constraining the assessment of results time.

We noted that the management response responded to the recommendations in a positive spirit with a commitment to act on many of the issues raised in a time bound fashion. However, the nature of the issues would require sustained commitment and consistent investment and efforts by the management. We hope that the management response commitments will be monitored and reported upon in the future as is the practice in many other agencies.

I would conclude with a short observation on the proposed evaluation policy of UNFPA. An evaluation policy is a mirror image of the organizations commitment to accountability, transparency, and application of lessons learned from experience. In some ways, it also represents the conscience of an organization. The criticality of an independent and objective evaluation policy cannot be underestimated. The draft policy as circulated reconfirms the strong commitment of UNFPA management to the principles of substantive accountability and to safeguard the quality, impartiality and independence of the evaluation function and of the evaluations it carries out. We understand it is a work in progress. The formulation is well structured and follows the traits of an independent evaluation function. However, we note that the independence dimension of the policy as stated still falls much below the optimal independence criteria for exercising evaluation independence and is weaker than some of the other evaluation policies endorsed by the Executive Boards of UN Funds and Programmes in the recent past. We trust that at this golden moment of legislating an organizational evaluation policy, both UNFPA and the Executive Board would secure and ensure true independence of the evaluation function.

Thank you very much for your kind attention