

**GLOBAL PARTNERS IN ACTION**

**NGO FORUM ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND**

**DEVELOPMENT – 2 SEPTEMBER 2009-09**

**BERLIN, GERMANY**

**COMMENTS BY DR. GILL GREER, DIRECTOR GENERAL,**

**IPPF, INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION**

**Opening Panel:**

I'm Dr Gill Greer, the Director General of International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Chair of the International Steering Group of 20 members from 15 countries. On their behalf, and also the Secretariat from GTZ and UNFPA, the UN Population Fund, it is my privilege to warmly welcome you today to this important NGO Forum. Thank you for making the journey to be here today, and for the diverse knowledge, experience and culture that you bring with you, from your organisation, your country, your people and communities.

NGOs were so much part of the preparation for Cairo, including with each other, governments, parliamentarians, UN agencies and other members of Civil Society. NGOs contributed much to the vision and values of ICPD, and have been leaders in its implementation. So it is truly fitting that we meet today to celebrate our progress before recommitting with new energy to the work that still needs to be done.

For some of you the journey towards health, rights and development began long before Cairo 15 years ago – and some of you much more recently. We are truly a global forum; we come from 131 countries, 106 from the South. There is great

richness and strength in our diversity – which will be needed for the road ahead from Berlin.

As Chair of the Steering Group it is my honour to Chair this opening session. Firstly I would like to introduce you to the honourable **Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek Zeul**. Not only does the Minister consistently represent Germany's strong commitment to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and recognition of its impact on well being, health, development and poverty elimination, but her own personal passion and commitment to these issues is unwavering. She has demonstrated her leadership yet again in hosting this unique NGO Forum, and it gives me great pleasure to ask her to give the opening address.

...Our second speaker, **Helen Clark**, deserves a warm welcome from us all. Not only is she the first woman Administrator of UNDP but it is the first time that the head of UNDP has played such a key role at an ICPD event. Her presence with us today demonstrates that the issues we are here to discuss, and the work ahead of us are vital to the work of UN as a whole and its vision of a better world. On several occasions over the last 10 years since ICPD+5, when the vision of Cairo was often challenged by its opponents, Helen's brief, as Prime Minister of New Zealand, to those of us on New Zealand delegations to UN meetings, despite opposition, was always clear and direct; "hold fast to the language of Cairo". She joins us today in a different role – but with the same determination to join with others to create a world of justice, human rights and participation for all.

...This Forum is the result of the joint commitment of the German government and UNFPA. **Thoraya Obaid**, as the Executive Director of UNFPA, is a global leader who has won respect of governments, parliamentarians and Civil Society for her work in advancing the goal and vision of Cairo and as a voice for those who all too often cannot speak for themselves, and as a true partner of governments, parliamentarians and Civil Society, recognising our complementary roles.

In planning this Forum it was our determination to recognise that those born in 1994 are now 15 – on the cusp of their adult lives – and that we have the largest generation of young people under 25 that the world has ever seen. Recognizing that they are the decision makers of the present, as well as of the future, we wish to hand on the torch to those who are already moving the principles of the Cairo agenda and objectives forward, who share our aspirations and will go beyond what we have done, and ever dreamed of.

The decision was made early on to ensure that 25% of participants from the South at this Forum would be young people, and that in addition to the Youth Forum held yesterday, young people would be part of every plenary and involved equally in decision making and responsibilities.

...So our fourth and final speaker is **Imane Khanchani** who is a Moroccan doctor working on women and young people's sexual and reproductive rights. She is actively involved in the women's rights movement in Morocco and is an active member of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. This

combination of her professional and personal life shows her passion and commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

...I would like, on behalf of all the participants to thank all of our speakers – for your leadership and commitment, for being with us, and for what you have said. You have provided us with the basis for the next 3 days work – and with inspiration for the way forward beyond Berlin, both individually and collectively.

The rest is now over to us – the participants. Our work in sexual and reproductive health and rights is challenging, often overlooked by some and vehemently opposed by others. These 3 days bring us together to share our experience and aspirations. In part this will be through the Berlin Call to Action. Your ideas have already contributed to an outline that was discussed in your regional meetings this morning. These ideas will go into a first draft that will be given to you as you leave for this evening's bus tour and dinner, to which we are all invited. We encourage you to comment on this draft and take it to the drafting committee in the Nizza room – made up of representatives of all six regions – between 9 and 10am tomorrow morning.

Many people are the sole representative from their country and know no-one. I ask you all to reach out, to each other over the next two days. Many of us are strangers to each other and to Berlin – but we have a shared purpose which brings us here today, and a vision of a better, brighter, world.

Thank you all – and again – a final thank you to our 4 opening speakers.