Government Ministers Convene Ahead of International Conference on Family Planning to Examine Returns on Investment in Family Planning

November meeting focuses on leadership and actions needed to mobilize Africa’s youth for economic development—making them part of the solution.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 7 November 2013 – More than 20 Ministers of Finance and Planning, Health, Youth, and Gender are among the leaders who will convene on 12 November to discuss the investments needed—especially in family planning—to meet the needs of Africa’s youth today, and to maximize their future potential for national development. The High-Level Ministerial Meeting will be held in conjunction with the third International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP 2013) in Addis Ababa.

Discussions will focus on the key role of family planning in helping nations reap the benefits of a “demographic dividend”—the accelerated economic growth that can result from a rapid decline in a country’s fertility rate, coupled with smart investments in health, education, and job creation. Multiple Asian countries have achieved the demographic dividend. Now, with the right investments, it could be within the reach of African nations. Earlier this year in Abidjan, African Ministers of Finance and Economic Development issued a joint call to launch a continental initiative on the demographic dividend.

Organized around the theme The Youth Dividend—Return on Investment in Family Planning, the meeting provides a platform for government leaders to discuss how best to expand opportunities for young people in their countries. Focus areas include fostering growth in the skills needed for a 21st century workforce, and promoting healthy behaviors. The meeting will also provide a forum for different government sectors, donors, and global partners to support policy actions for youth and family planning.

“Governments, together with national institutions, civil society, communities, and other development partners, are responsible for creating opportunities for their people, especially the young,” said Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). “Young people are key to development, but they will only be able to fully contribute to their communities if they can realize their right to make choices related to their reproductive life. If they are able to avoid adolescent pregnancy and stay longer in school, they will have better prospects and more opportunities. That is the real wealth of a nation.”

“Family planning should be enshrined as a fundamental human right, but it is also a critical component of an effective development agenda,” said Dr. Tewodros Melesse, Director General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. “Governments play a crucial role in addressing inequalities, including tackling unmet need for family planning and increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services for the poorest and most vulnerable populations. The ministers’ meeting in Addis will call for action and high level consensus on family planning, making it a key investment, and should set the stage for action that many countries can follow.”

Over the past decade, countries throughout Africa have experienced sustained economic growth and unprecedented development. Despite these gains, almost two of every three people on the continent—660 million in total—are still living on less than $2 per day. Today’s large youth populations—the youth bulge—hold great potential to catalyze development, and reduce inequality and poverty, but only if governments make the
right investments to transform this opportunity into reality. Family planning is one of those essential investments.

Christelle Kwizera, a young activist from Rwanda, will be representing youth at the meeting and presenting their needs for sexual and reproductive health, skill building beyond the traditional education system, and economic empowerment. “Throughout the continent, African youth are tackling social challenges,” she said. “They are more aware and connected than ever, and will only grow more so. Governments and traditional organizations look at challenges from the outside, but youth experience those challenges intimately and see policymakers’ mistaken assumptions. Working together with young people on policies that will affect them will elicit change rather than impose it. That is the way to educate a generation.”

Click here for a list of High-Level Government Delegates who will be in attendance.

The High-Level Ministerial Meeting precedes ICFP 2013, 12 – 15 November 2013 in Addis Ababa. The conference will bring thousands of political leaders, experts, researchers, and advocates together to call attention to the wide-ranging benefits of helping people plan their families—including improved maternal and child health, increased educational attainment, and greater economic opportunity.

The ministers’ meeting and ICFP 2013 are jointly organized by the Ministry of Health of Ethiopia and the Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, with the aid of an organizing committee of organizations and experts on youth, family planning policy and programs, and poverty alleviation. ICFP 2013 will be the largest family planning conference to date, following the inaugural ICFP in Kampala, Uganda, in 2009 and ICFP 2011 in Dakar, Senegal.

HLMM Organizing and Supporting Partners:
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
United Nations Foundation (UNF)
United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID)
World Health Organization (WHO)
Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Advance Family Planning (AFP)
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
Partners in Population and Development Africa Regional Office (PPD ARO)
Futures Group
Center for Communication Programs (CCP)
Population Reference Bureau (PRB)
Population Action International (PAI)

MORE INFORMATION: For more information, please visit www.fpconference2013.org and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. The ICFP 2013 plenary program is available online here, and the full conference program can be found here.
High-Level Government Delegates Confirmed for HLMM Attendance (as of 1 November 2013):

1. **Hon. Dr. Carlos Alberto Masseca**, Secretary of State for Health Angola
2. **Hon. Dr. Nhanga Kalunga Helder de Assuncao**, Secretary of State for Youth, Ministry of Youth Angola
3. **Hon. Mr. Lucien Marie Noël Bembamba Ministre**, Ministère de l’Economie et des Finances, Burkina Faso
4. **Hon. Mr. Léné Sebagó**, Ministère de la Santé, Burkina Faso
5. **Hon. Dr. Ahmat Djidda Mahamat**, Minister of Health, Le Ministre de la Santé Publique, Chad
7. **Hon. Dr. Félix Kabange Numbi Mukwambé**, Ministre de la Sante Publique, Ministère de la Santé Publique, Democratic Republic of the Congo
8. **Hon. Mrs. Geneviève Inagosi-Bulo Ibambi**, Minister of Gender, Family and Children, Democratic Republic of the Congo
9. **Hon. Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu**, Minister of Health, Ethiopia
10. **Hon. Dr. Sufian Ahmed**, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ethiopia
11. **Hon. Hanny-Sherry Ayittey**, Minister of Health, Ministry of Health Ghana
12. **Hon. Mr. Kazuhiro Suzuki**, Ambassador to Ethiopia, Japan
14. **Hon. James Wainaina Macharia**, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya
15. **Hon. Catherine Hara**, Minister, Ministry of Health, Malawi
17. **Hon. Ousmane Koné**, Ministre, Ministre de la santé et de l’hygiène publique Mali
18. **Hon. Janette Garin**, Undersecretary of Health, Philippines
19. **Hon. Jean Philibet Nsengimana**, Minister of Youth and ICT Rwanda
20. **Hon. Dr. Makur Matur Kariom**, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health, South Sudan
21. **Hon. Joseph Bakosoro Bangasi**, Governor, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan
22. **Hon. Dr. John Bono**, Minister of Health, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan
23. **Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Ija Baya Jambo**, Minister of Health, Central Equatoria State South Sudan
24. **Hon. Margaret Leonardo Itto**, Minister of Health, Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan
25. **Hon. Mr. Sicelo M. Dlamini**, Principal Secretary/Acting Minister of Youth Affairs, Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Swaziland
26. **Hon. Sarah Opendi**, Hon. Minister of State for Health (Primary Health Care), Ministry of Health, Uganda
27. **Hon. Matia Kasalja**, Minister of State, Ministry of Finance, Uganda
28. **Hon. Dr. Ahmed Qasim Al Ansi**, Minister, Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOPHP), Yemen
29. **Hon. Dr. Nagiba Al Shawafi**, Deputy Minister for Population, Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOPHP), Yemen
30. **Hon. Dr. Joseph Katema**, Minister, Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health, Zambia