OFFICIAL PRESS BRIEFING: Making a Difference through Sustained Political Commitment

Addis Ababa, November 12: Political leaders have the ability to serve as powerful, visible advocates for national and global family planning, cutting across many critical issues: human rights, women’s rights and empowerment, sustainable development, environment, poverty and equity. At today’s press conference, international political leaders and advocates highlighted the importance and impact of sustained political commitment in expanding contraceptive access, and shared their challenges and successes in advancing family planning policies.

H.E. Dr. Kebede Worku, State Minister of Health, Ethiopia, Hon. Catherine Gotani Harra, Minister of Health, Malawi, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA and Jill Sheffield, Founder and President, Women Deliver were in attendance.

Youth, Sex and Mobile Phones: The Latest in Engaging Young People with Mobile Technology Hosted by Pathfinder International

Addis Ababa, November 12: This fall, Pathfinder launched mcenas!—Mozambique’s first text messaging campaign that delivers information and stories about sex and contraception to young people at the touch of a button. Yesterday Pathfinder announced the impact of mcenas! and talked about what’s next for Pathfinder in Ethiopia. The press briefing was introduced by Pathfinder International President and CEO Purnima Mane. Carolien Albers, Chief of Party, Family Planning Initiative Project in Mozambique, Callie Simon, Technical Advisor for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health, Workinesh Kereta, Senior Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Advisor, Ethiopia were in attendance.

Ethiopia’s achievement on family planning earns acclaim

Addis Ababa, November 12: President of Global Development at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr. Christopher Elias, credited the success Ethiopia registered in recent years on family planning to political commitment and implementation of innovative community health programs.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 3rd International Conference on Family Planning yesterday, Dr. Elias noted that the flagship Health Extension Program (HEP) Ethiopia has implemented in recent years is also behind the strides the country made in the reduction of under-five child mortality and achieving the MDG target two years before the end date.

He noted that sustained political commitment is what is needed. He said that tracking progress is an area that needs real work to ensure that countries will be on course to fulfill the commitments they made at the London Family Planning Summit to make family planning services accessible to 120 million more women in developing countries by 2020.

Approximately 3,300 participants from 120 countries are participating in this event, which is the largest conference on family planning ever. The meeting kicked off yesterday with a colorful opening ceremony.

Family planning services need to target young girls

Addis Ababa, November 12: More than 7 million girls around the world get pregnant every year due to lack of access to youth friendly family planning services, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), noted. He indicated that earnest measures need to be undertaken to reach young girls with family planning services.

Dr. Osotimehin said that in order for Africa to achieve the demographic dividend, it needs to build the capacity of its young people. He stated the need for harnessing youth by investing in their education and market and skill development. He said youth must be allowed to exercise their rights and underlined the need to fight practices such as child marriage and adolescent pregnancy that are jeopardizing young girls’ rights. Investment in comprehensive sexual education is vital, he added.

Dr. Osotimehin went on to say that as the world is crafting the next generation development agenda, three things—namely human rights, equity and social justice, and gender equality—need to take center-stage.

Family Planning for Development

Addis Ababa, November 12: H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, said that “family planning is very important for Africans because it is the center for development.” She pointed out that since half of the population in Africa is women and most are young, talking about family planning is a quest for promoting education, health, the emancipation of women and women’s reproductive health rights. She said family planning is not only a health issue but also a social, political and economic concern.

Heads of State from Malawi and Thailand and the US Secretary of State also sent video messages underlying the importance of this great gathering on family planning.

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ICFP 2013 Officially Open

The long awaited third International Conference on Family Planning, centered on the theme “Full Access, Full Choice,” kicked off on November 12, 2013, in the presence of 3,300 participants from 120 countries working in various fields of research, academia, civil society, policy and private sector including over 250 youth participants.

Political Commitment in Family Planning

PM of Ethiopia Renews Commitment

Addis Ababa, November 12: H.E Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in his opening speech renewed the government of Ethiopia’s commitment to reach more than 6 million women with Family Planning (FP) services by 2015 and an additional 5 million by 2020 through budgeting for FP at both federal and local government levels.

He said this could be achieved by the health delivery system put in place by the government in conjunction with the expansion of access to basic health services, increasing well-equipped health facilities and the more than 38,000 Health Extension Workers (HEWs) together with a participatory Women-Centered Health Development Army.

On this largest ever gathering on FP, Mr. Hailemariam pointed out that this conference is important in maintaining the momentum to achieve the FP goal set in London in 2012. He also said that although there were challenges in achieving MDG 5 on maternal health, global momentum to support this cause is one that inspires a renewed sense of urgency and commitment.

Minister says family planning a development priority

Addis Ababa, November 12: “Family planning is a national development priority,” said Dr. Kesetebhran Admasu, Minister of Health of Ethiopia, in a keynote address he made at the opening ceremony of the 3rd International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP). He indicated that as per the commitments Ethiopia made at the London Summit, the country is working to reach an additional 11.2 million women by 2020. He called on all stakeholders to accelerate the momentum and increase commitment.

Ethiopia’s flagship Health Extension Program (HEP) had been pivotal in the country’s effort in increasing access to Family Planning (FP) services as well as achieving MDG4 and MDG6 well ahead of the target date in 2015, the Minister stated. He went on to note that the country was currently engaged in organizing the Women-Centered Health Development Army which is playing a key role in addressing barriers to seeking health services, especially on family planning. The members of the Women-Centered Health Development Army numbering around 3 million women are working closely with Health Extension Workers (HEWs) in increasing access on FP.

Dr. Kesetebhran indicated that a lot remains to be done in reaching more women with family planning services. He noted one challenge related to mobilization of financial resources in achieving FP commodity security. He also underlined the need for countries to chart their own course of development. He called on development partners to be fully committed to support country-led processes if the family planning goals for the year 2020 are to be met and the MDG targets to be achieved.