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cc: Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA  
Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women  
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June 6, 2014

**Subject:** The Post-2015 Development Agenda Must Include Women's<sup>1</sup> Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Secretary General,

On May 28, the International Day of Action for Women's Health, women's rights defenders mobilized worldwide for the inclusion of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This year's May 28 campaign was undertaken by the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) in collaboration with 30 partners, and 150 organizations and 72 individuals worldwide endorsed the [Call for Action](#) with the following collective message.

Nearly 30 years on from when women's rights activists first launched May 28, not only do the challenges obstructing the full realization of all women's health and wellbeing remain varied and often unaddressed, a disturbing paradigm has also persisted: namely, an often limited, narrow and imposed understanding of women's health, as well as the actual needs of all women and girls in all their diversities.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>2</sup> perpetuated this limited understanding by focusing almost exclusively on maternal health, itself defined narrowly by survival numbers and the presence of skilled birth attendants, as opposed to a comprehensive definition which includes women and girls' autonomy, privacy and dignity rights. By narrowly focusing on maternal health, the MDGs effectively omitted and ignored the commitments governments made at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which placed gender equality, women's empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights at the heart of sustainable development.<sup>3</sup>

As we all know, women are not just mothers – we are women and girls of all ages and diverse sexualities; women with or without children; women who are single, married or unmarried; women who are living with or are affected by HIV; women with different abilities and disabilities. We are cis-women,<sup>4</sup> trans-women, and gender-non-conforming women; we are indigenous women, migrant women, sex workers, and women who work in formal and informal sectors. We are women of different socioeconomic statuses, and women belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; women, in effect, of multiple and intersecting identities, with diverse health needs over the course of our lives.

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<sup>1</sup> While we use the term 'woman/women' we do so with a critical reflexivity that recognizes the nuances and right to people's unique sexual and gender identities and expressions. We also recognize that 'women' are not a monolithic group and that they have diverse identities that vary due to their social location and the socio-economic, political, and multicultural contexts in which their lives are embedded.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations, General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, A/RES/55/2 (18 September 2000), available from <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>International Conference on Population and Development - ICPD - Programme of Action A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1 -- Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, available from <https://www.unfpa.org/public/cache/offonce/home/publications/pid/1973;jsessionid=8FD210A26BB5A9F0C51F0A944D77CF5D.jahia01>

<sup>4</sup>Cis-woman: A ciswoman, shorthand for "cissexual woman" or "cisgender woman," is a non-transsexual woman--a woman whose assigned gender is female, and whose assigned female gender is more or less consistent with her personal sense of self. Definition borrowed from About.com Civil Liberties available from <http://civilliberty.about.com/od/gendersexuality/g/Ciswoman-Cissexual-Woman.htm>

In spite of these realities, there is a lack of meaningful commitment on the part of governments to address the diverse nature of women's sexual and reproductive health issues, as well as promote, protect, and respect our sexual rights and reproductive rights to decide freely upon all aspects of our body, our sexuality and our lives, free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

As such, **it is vital that existing commitments on women and girls' SRHR not only be included but also strengthened in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.**

**The new development agenda MUST firmly establish a holistic, inclusive, and human rights-based approach to women's health.**

We cannot talk of sustainable development without the respect of human rights of women and girls in all their diversities, and without the meaningful participation of women and girls in the creation of the Post-2015 development framework. If one hopes to have a holistic, inclusive, forward-looking, and relevant Post-2015 Development Agenda, we believe women's health for all, particularly in terms of their SRHR, must be central to the goals and targets, and draw on existing international and regional human rights treaties such as CEDAW,<sup>5</sup> Belem do Pará Convention<sup>6</sup> and Maputo Protocol,<sup>7</sup> and the most progressive international and regional documents and consensuses such as the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration,<sup>8</sup> the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development<sup>9</sup> and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.<sup>10</sup>

When states fail to recognize full sexual rights and reproductive rights, they not only compromise women's health, they both tolerate and endorse institutional and structural violence towards women and girls, abusing their human rights and perpetuating their marginalization and social exclusion. Any Post-2015 Development Agenda will fail to be transformative if women and girls' sexual rights and reproductive rights are not meaningfully included as an integral component for equitable and sustainable development.

**In this sense, we urge UN agencies and governments to ensure a comprehensive, high-quality, and integrated approach to SRHR, including but not limited to:**

- The recognition of the SRHR of young people, ensuring access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services, as well as comprehensive sexuality education that is gender sensitive, non-discriminatory and life-skills based, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacity of adolescents and young people;
- The recognition of the sexual rights (including the right to pleasure) of all people, including those who are most marginalized;
- Universal access to a full range of voluntary contraceptive methods, including emergency contraception, that is of high quality and variety, is also user-friendly and appropriate to the needs of girls, adolescents and women, and ensures their confidentiality;
- Universal access to safe and legal abortion, urging governments to review and repeal laws that criminalize voluntary abortion, and remove all legal and implementation barriers to ensuring access to safe, comprehensive, free, sensitive and high-quality procedures for pregnancy termination, free of marital and/or parental consent requirements;
- The integration of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in SRHR services, where such integration is also bi-directional and ensures comprehensive SRHR in HIV related programming and services;

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<sup>5</sup>United Nations, General Assembly, *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* (18 December 1979) available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

<sup>6</sup>United Nations, General Assembly, *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women "Convention of Belem Do Para"* (9 June 1994), available from <http://www.cidh.org/Basicos/English/basic13.Conv%20of%20Belem%20Do%20Para.htm>

<sup>7</sup>African Union, *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*, (March 1995), available from <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Documents/Treaties/Text/Protocol%20on%20the%20Rights%20of%20Women.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration (December 2012) available from <http://www.icpdyouth.org/>

<sup>9</sup>Report of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, Bangkok, 16-20 September 2013 available from <http://www.unescap.org/resources/sixth-appc-report>

<sup>10</sup>United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development*, LC/L.3697 (23 September 2013), available from [http://www.cepal.org/celade/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/9/50709/2013-596-montevideo\\_consensus\\_pyd.pdf](http://www.cepal.org/celade/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/9/50709/2013-596-montevideo_consensus_pyd.pdf)

- The recognition of and respect for women's reproductive rights regarding access, bodily integrity, autonomy, and decision-making in various contexts, including surrogacy, New Reproductive Technologies, and Human Rights in Childbirth, among others;
- The eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination based on age, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, occupation, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, migrant or HIV status, among other grounds.

Over the course of the upcoming year and all Post-2015 processes, we, the undersigned, urge you to speak out and support a holistic approach to women's health, one that recognizes women's sexual rights and reproductive rights, and supports women of all ages as they make sexual and reproductive choices for themselves, throughout their whole lives.

*The May 28 Call for Action has been endorsed by the 150 undersigned organizations and 72 individuals worldwide. For more information about the May 28 Campaign, please visit [may28.org](http://may28.org).*

#### May 28 Partners

AIDS Accountability International  
 Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (APA)  
 Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)  
 Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP)  
 ASTRA Central and Eastern European Women's Network for SRHR  
 ASTRA Youth  
 Center for Reproductive Rights  
 Consorcio Latino Americano Contra el Aborto Inseguro (CLACAI)  
 CREA  
 Decidir Nos Hace Libres  
 DIGNA  
 Human Rights in Childbirth  
 International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion  
 International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH)  
 International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW Global)  
 International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF –

Western Hemisphere)  
 Ipas  
 La Mesa  
 Pathfinder International  
 PopDev, Hampshire College  
 RODA  
 Rodilnitza  
 Sonke Gender Justice Network  
 Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues (TARSHI)  
 Women Deliver  
 Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC)  
 Women Living Under Muslim Laws  
 Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)  
 Women's Networking Zone for the AIDS 2014 Conference  
 World YWCA  
 Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR)

#### Organizational Signatories

ACOME  
 Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD)  
 Advocates for Youth  
 African Life Centre  
 Aitemad Research & Development Organization  
 Alliance Genève Droits Homme  
 Almajed Organization  
 Alliances for Africa  
 Austrian Family Planning Association  
 Asociación Promoción y Desarrollo de la Mujer  
 Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina (AMMAR)  
 Association des mamans célibataire pour la paix et le

developpement  
 Association pour le developpement et de la promotion des droits humains  
 Ateneo Public Interest And Legal Advocacy, Philippines  
 Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud A.C.  
 BanhaKa  
 Beyond 2015 Africa  
 BPW Yaounde  
 Brokenshire Women Center, Philippines  
 Catholics 4 Reproductive Health Mindanao, Philippines  
 Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)  
 Centre for Human Rights and Climate Change

Research  
 Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina (CIPAF)  
 COALITION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT ET LA REHABILITATION SOCIALE, CODR  
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 CHOICE for Youth Sexuality  
 Colectiva Mujer y Salud  
 Colectivo Feminista Panteras Rosas  
 Corporación Red Nacional de Mujeres Comunes, Comunitarias, Indígenas y Campesinas de la República de Colombia (REDCOMUINCACOL)  
 CREHPA  
 dance4life  
 Defense for Human and Civil Rights (DHCR)  
 Development of Institution & Youth Alliance – DIYA  
 Development of Peoples Foundation  
 Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia, Mexico  
 FAMEDEV-Inter Africa Network for Women  
 Family Planning Organization of The Phil. Davao City Chapter  
 Federacion de Planificación Familiar Estatal  
 FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS- FIDA KENYA  
 FEMNET (African Women's Development & Communication Network)  
 FOKUS - Forum for Women and Development  
 Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaise  
 Fortress of Hope Africa  
 French Family Planning Movement (MFPF)  
 Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM)  
 Gabriela Southern Mindanao  
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 GIRLS' POWER INITIATIVE (GPI)  
 Global Fund for Women  
 GOOD LIVING INITIATIVE  
 HACEP-Ghana  
 HERA  
 HIV/AIDS Education & Development Centre, Rivers State  
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 Incorruptibles Colombia  
 International AIDS Women Caucus (IAWC)  
 International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)  
 International Federation of Medical Students' Associations  
 International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)  
 International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)  
 Ipas México  
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 Mindanao Migrants Center On Empowering Action, Philippines  
 Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa  
 National Development Committee, Janakpur  
 National Network of Abortion Funds  
 Noor Pakistan (NOOR)  
 Nnabagereka Development Foundation (NDF)  
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 Participatory Human Rights Advancement Society  
 Peace Foundation Pakistan  
 People's Health Movement Nepal Students' Circle  
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 PLATAFORMA DECIDIR NOS HACE LIBRES  
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 SCORA Africa  
 SI Mujer – Nicaragua  
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 SRHR Coalition Nepal  
 STOP AIDS NOW!  
 Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), Thailand  
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 Taller Salud  
 The Awakening  
 TICAH  
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 Unión de Asociaciones Familiares (UNAF)  
 Union Women Center  
 Wakiso Muslim Youth Development Foundation  
 WeYouth Tunisia  
 WISH Associates  
 WOMEN AGAINST RAPE INC. (W.A.R.)  
 Women For A Change, Cameroon  
 Women for peace and ecology  
 Women for Women's Human Rights - New Ways  
 Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, Ghana  
 Women in Science and Engineering (WISE India)  
 Women's Promotion Centre  
 World Assembly of Youth (WAY)

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)  
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