June 6, 2014

Subject: The Post-2015 Development Agenda Must Include Women’s 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) 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.

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, 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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1 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.
4 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,5 Belem do Pará Convention6 and Maputo Protocol,7 and the most progressive international and regional documents and consensuses such as the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration,8 the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development9 and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.10

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

**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**

- Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD)
- Advocates for Youth
- African Life Centre
- Attemad 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 développement
- Association pour le développement 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
UBUNTU

CHOICE for Youth Sexuality
Colectiva Mujer y Salud
Colectivo Feminista Panteras Rosas
Corporación Red Nacional de Mujeres Comunales, Comunitarias, Indígenas y Campesinas de la República de Colombia (REDCOMUINCACOL)

CREHAPA
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

Generation Initiative For Women and Youth Network (GIWYN)

GIRLS’ POWER INITIATIVE (GPI)

Global Fund for Women
GOOD LIVING INITIATIVE

HACEP-Ghana
HERA

HIV/AIDS Education & Development Centre, Rivers State
Ibis Reproductive Health

Incorrubibles 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
ISDE Bangladesh

Kadamay, Philippines
Kaugmaon Children Center, Philippines

Kyetume Community Based Health Care Programme
Lilith Fund for Reproductive Equity

Local Development Agency on Reproductive and Maternal Health (LODARMAH)

MEDECINS DU MONDE
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)
Orissa State Volunteers Social Workers Association

PARA EL MEJORAMIENTO Y LA CALIDAD DE VIDA DE TRABAJADORAS SEXUALES (LA SALA) COSTA RICA

Participatory Human Rights Advancement Society
Peace Foundation Pakistan

People’s Health Movement Nepal Students’ Circle

PLANNED PARENTHOOD ASSOCIATION OF LIBERIA (PPAL)

PLATAFORMA DECIDIR NOS HACE LIBRES

Promsex

Red de Mujeres Trabajadoras Sexuales de Latinoamerica y el Caribe (REDTRASEX)

Red Nacional de Mujeres

Reproductive Health Network of Davao City, Philippines

Rozaria Memorial Trust

RURAL-URBAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (RUWACDA)

Rutgers WPF Pakistan

Sama Resource Group for Women and Health, India

Samsara Indonesia

SARYN (IPPF South Asia)

SCORA Africa

SI Mujer – Nicaragua

South African National AIDS Council Women’s Sector [SANACWS]

SRHR Coalition Nepal

STOP AIDS NOW!

Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), Thailand

Talikala

Taller Salud

The Awakening

TICAH

Tierra Viva

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)
Individual Signatories

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