



Right Honorable Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda
Honorable Abdelwahad Radi, President of the IPU
Distinguished Secretary-General of the IPU, Anders Johnsson
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Delegates, invited guests.

Introduction and Every Woman, Every Child

Thank you for inviting me to this important discussion. It is a true honor to be part of this world-wide parliamentary dialogue.

I am pleased that my colleague, Anthony Lake, highlighted the importance of good nutrition as a critical element of children's health.

As children grow and go to school, providing good nutrition, together with quality education and health services, remain a crucial investment in their development.

Ensuring that these most basic needs are met can turn today's development challenges into opportunities and progress.

The child's first months and years are a critical window to provide adequate nutrition, and this is much more likely to happen if the child's mother is healthy and empowered.

The Secretary General's *Every Woman, Every Child* initiative connects women's and children's health, and I am pleased to say that UNICEF and UNFPA are championing these efforts.

Just last week, we launched a high-level commission for the increased availability and accessibility of essential but underutilized supplies for maternal and child health. With Mr. Lake, we are the co-vice-chairs of the Commission.

In this context, I would like to recognize the significance of the Assembly's discussion on women and children's health and the importance of the draft resolution on the role of parliaments in securing the health of women and children to be tabled this week.

These efforts are critical because it is only with the support of all stakeholders that the world can make the much needed progress on women's and children's health.

As Members of Parliament, you are in a key position in ensuring adequate budget lines for health, holding governments accountable for their commitments, building partnerships and tearing down legal and economic barriers to put women and men, and boys and girls, on an equal footing in all spheres of life.

World at 7 billion and investing in young people, especially adolescent girls

Ladies and gentlemen,

the key point I want to make is that women's and children's health, and especially girls' education, health and empowerment, are not only important ends in their own right; they are also essential interventions for addressing population dynamics and paving the way for sustainable development.

A few months ago, the world's population surpassed 7 billion. Reaching the milestone, with just three years to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, was a call to action to increase equity and build a world of opportunity for all.

From the Arab Spring to the sit-ins on Wall Street, people are demanding change. Many of them are young, and they are determined to transform politics, culture and the economy in their own societies and beyond.

Today, the world is home to some 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24. Nine in ten of these young people live in the developing world, and half of them are girls. Their generation holds the greatest potential to accelerate social and economic progress.

To seize this opportunity, young people need a healthy start for life, including good nutrition. They also need quality education and health services that are tailored to their needs.

Especially adolescent girls need increased attention. Too often, a girl is married off as a child. Too often, she becomes pregnant, with a risk of dying in childbirth, when she should be allowed to focus on school. Too often, she faces violence, discrimination and fear.

Adolescent girls, like all young people, deserve better; they deserve health, education and opportunities to steer their own lives.

Sexual and reproductive health as key intervention

Besides education, which is probably the most important long-term investment for greater prosperity, the empowerment of girls and women is underpinned by their access to health care.

Currently, some 1000 women die in pregnancy-related complications every day, and over 200 million women in developing countries need access to modern family planning but can't get it.

Millions of adolescent girls and boys don't get the basic information about sexuality and how to prevent pregnancies or protect themselves from HIV.

Education and stronger health care systems that can deliver for all women and girls would yield great returns for present and future generations.

These investments must be backed by laws and policies that protect the rights of women and girls. And when the laws are in place, they need to be fully implemented.

Focusing on people for sustainable development

Ladies and gentlemen,

This June, in Rio, the world community seeks renewed political commitment and a new push for sustainable development.

As we approach Rio, you will hear a great deal of talk about economic growth and environment, which are crucial issues. But the third pillar of sustainability, the social pillar, cannot be neglected either.

Strengthening the social pillar means promoting human rights, sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and empowerment of youth.

Going forward, two actions are absolutely critical:

First, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, and meet unmet need for family planning so that all women are can freely decide the number and timing of their children.

In fact there are currently 215 million women who would like to be using modern forms of contraception, but do not have access to them.

But the international community is renewing its commitment and I am pleased to inform you about **the —Gold Moment on Family Planning.**

The Gold Moment on Family Planning which will take place in London just before the opening of the Olympics—will focus attention, policy, and funding on meeting the global unmet need for family planning. The Gold Moment is designed to set a course to close this gap in unmet need by 2020.

And second, invest in young people – their health, education and job opportunities – and especially ensure that no girl is left behind.

These targeted investments would reduce infant, child and maternal mortality, slow population growth and help people break out of poverty.

ICPD beyond 2014 and the emerging development agenda

These investments are also at the heart of the Programme of Action that came out from the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD, in 1994.

In Cairo, world leaders from 179 countries came together to put the health, rights, dignity and well-being of people at the centre of development. This became UNFPA's mission, and it is as critical today as it was in 1994.

The 20th anniversary of the ICPD is rapidly approaching, as is the target year for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is a critical opportunity to ensure that the central issues of the ICPD agenda—women's and girls' health education and rights—are kept front and center of the emerging development agenda.

The new report of Countdown to 2015, *Accountability for Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival*, shows that 35 of the 73 countries covered by the report have reduced maternal mortality by at least 40% between 1990 and 2008. But still, progress in most countries has been insufficient, and a number of countries showed no progress at all.

The inequalities within countries are perhaps even more dramatic than between countries. In fact, maternal mortality is the world's largest health inequity. Women who are poor and living in rural areas and young girls often have the least access to the services they need.

Despite considerable progress at the aggregate level, we haven't been able to ensure equity in development. And equity is exactly what is needed put nations on a lasting trajectory of progress.

As you pass laws, budgets and advocate for investments, I urge you to focus on their impact on the lowest quintile of the society, especially women and children.

Closing

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The paramount challenge of this century is to meet the needs of 7 billion human beings now – and the billions to come – while protecting the intricate balance of nature that sustains life.

As we approach Rio this June, and as we begin to discuss the development agenda beyond MDGS, we must make sure to keep people and the principle of equity at the centre of our efforts.

I believe that Parliaments should be critical actors in defining this agenda and ensuring that the voice of the people is heard. When Parliamentarians speak everybody will listen.

With the right investments in people—particularly adolescents and youth—we can have thriving cities; productive labour forces that fuel economic growth; and communities where people are healthy, economically secure and living dignified lives.

In a world of 7 billion and growing, UNFPA is committed to focus our efforts towards delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

I thank you.