



## Statement on Behalf of Civil Society Co-Organizers

### *Commitment to Progress for Mothers, Newborns and Children*

*25 September 2008, Millennium Plaza Hotel*

Presented by Ann Starrs, President, Family Care International

It is an honor for me to speak on behalf of the civil society organizations that helped plan this event.

The world's attention is often fleeting, focusing on the immediate crisis at hand. Our challenge is to not let the world forget: We **must** move MDGs 4 and 5 to a central place on global and national agendas. Inaction is inexcusable.

And we have a not-so-secret weapon: the remarkable energy force of civil society organizations, the change makers that propel progress on the ground. Together, we are millions and millions of advocates and activists, midwives and managers. Our roles are many, and every one of them is vital. We are:

- **Advocates**, mobilizing thousands to speak with clarity, unity and passion to demand action.
- We are **a voice of the people**, engaging populations and communities that are too often left out of policy deliberations.
- We are **watchdogs**, holding governments accountable for their pledges and commitments.
- We are **service providers**, at the forefront of delivering health care when communities are overwhelmed, when infrastructure is inadequate, and when needs are ignored.
- We are **providers of technical knowledge**, training health workers and translating research findings into practical programs that have a direct impact on people's lives.

Civil society is about participation, about caring, about action. We are doers. We are building a better world, a world where women and children don't die simply because no one cared enough, and where the right to basic health care is respected and realized. Our pledge today is to do our job—now, tomorrow and everyday—to make pregnancy, childbirth, and childhood safe everywhere.