

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **New Global Consensus on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health to save over 10 million lives**

#### ***World leaders commit to new funding for women's and children's health... More is needed***

**NEW YORK 23 September 2009:** A new Consensus for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, setting out five key action steps to save the lives of more than 10 million women and children by 2015, was launched today at a high-level event at the United Nations. The Consensus, strongly endorsed by the Group of Eight (G8) at its meeting in Italy in July, was agreed this year by a broad range of governments, non-governmental organizations, international health agencies, and individuals, through the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH), and formally launched today by Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

The event, titled *Investing in Our Common Future: Healthy Women, Healthy Children*, was hosted by U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Robert Zoellick, President of The World Bank, co-chairs of the Taskforce on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems, which was set up by world leaders twelve months ago. At today's event, Mr. Brown and Mr. Zoellick proposed innovative measures to finance health programs for women and children in developing countries. Included among the proposals, whose multi-year impact is expected to total over \$5 billion, were a significant expansion of the International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm); a second Advance Market Commitment (AMC) to fund research and development for vaccines and other health products; and a scheme enabling individuals to make "Voluntary Solidarity Contributions" when they purchase air flights and other travel products. Leaders of Nepal, Malawi, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone also committed to new measures to expand access to health services in their countries. Several speakers stressed the urgent need for new funding mechanisms in order to fulfil the promise of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs, agreed by the UN General Assembly in 2000, are the global agenda for eradicating extreme poverty and its effects. More than halfway to the 2015 deadline, however, the health-related goals — and particularly MDGs 4 (*Reduce child mortality*) and 5 (*Improve maternal health*) — are far off track. Failure to take urgent action now will mean a continuation of the preventable deaths of 4 million children and 780,000 adults each year, including half a million women who die annually in pregnancy or childbirth. The UN event, attended by several heads of state, heads of government, and other dignitaries, reflected the united political will of the international community to take what the Consensus for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health calls "bold, focused and coordinated action on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health."

Political will is in fact the first of five pillars of the global Consensus, which lists the priority actions that are needed to accelerate progress on the MDGs for maternal and child health. They are: (1) political leadership and community engagement; (2) a quality package of evidence-based interventions, delivered through effective health systems; (3) the removal of barriers to access, with services ideally

being free at point of use for all women and children; (4) skilled and motivated health workers, in the right place at the right time; and (5) accountability for results.

Flavia Bustreo, Director of PMNCH, emphasized the importance of taking urgent action to invest in women's and children's health, saying, "A child dies every three seconds, and a woman dies every minute from complications of pregnancy or childbirth — and it is in our power to prevent almost all of these deaths. The recommendations announced today by the Taskforce go some way to mobilising new finances, but the Consensus — which calls for \$30 billion of additional funding over the next six years — makes it clear that much more is needed. Governments in both developed and developing countries must fulfil all of their prior funding commitments, and must generate new funding to make up the difference. The lives of millions of women and children depend on it, and the Partnership is committed to holding leaders accountable."

Today's UN event, building on a similar high-level meeting that took place at last year's UN General Assembly, was co-sponsored by the Taskforce and PMNCH, and organised in partnership with the governments of Chile, Finland, and Tanzania. Presidents Michelle Bachelet of Chile and Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania reported on progress since last year's meeting, along with Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, a strong supporter of the Consensus. Ms. Bachelet stressed the importance of tracking existing commitments to ensure that pledges are fulfilled and that funds are used in the most effective way to achieve results.

The Consensus sets out a framework for, between now and 2015, preventing the needless deaths of 1 million women from pregnancy and childbirth complications, saving the lives of 4.5 million newborn babies and 6.5 million children under age 5, sharply cutting global numbers of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, providing family planning services to all women and families who want them, and reducing chronic malnutrition among young children by more than one-third. It also lists key indicators that reflect the additional health services necessary to meet those goals, including hundreds of million more women receiving quality pregnancy care before, during, and after childbirth, children receiving appropriate medical care for pneumonia, and couples using modern family planning methods, along with the 3.5 million additional trained health care professionals and community health workers who are needed to deliver those services.

Ann Starrs, co-chair of PMNCH and president of Family Care International, a non-governmental organization that works to improve maternal health, said: "Women and children in poor countries get sick, are injured, and die every minute of every day, from causes that are routinely prevented or treated in the developed world. We know how to end this slow-motion catastrophe, and the Consensus is our roadmap for making it happen. It also represents the world's solemn promise to its poorest and most vulnerable people. Now it is up to all of us make sure that our leaders keep their promises."

#### **About PMNCH:**

The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health is an international alliance of some 280 governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, health care professionals, academics, and multilateral agencies. Its mission is to support the global health community to work successfully towards achieving MDGs 4 and 5 by advocating for national, regional and global political commitments, and by raising funds to reduce maternal and child mortality. It enhances partners' interactions and uses their comparative advantages to: (1) build consensus on and promote evidence-based, high-impact interventions and deliver them through harmonization; (2) contribute to raising



US\$ 30 billion (for 2009-2015) to improve maternal, newborn and child health through advocacy; and (3) track partners' commitments and measurement of progress for accountability.

[www.pmnch.org](http://www.pmnch.org)

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***Note to Editors: The Consensus for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is attached to this press release, and is also available in PDF format from the contacts below.***

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