



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contacts:

Ms Catherina Hinz
Director - Communications and Advocacy
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung
(DSW)
(Contact for German journalists)
Email: catherina.hinz@dsw-hannover.de
Fon: +49 511 943 7320 | Cell: +49 162
471 5969

Ms Jennifer Woodside
Head of Advocacy & Communications
International Planned Parenthood
Federation (IPPF)
(Contact for European journalists)
Email: jwoodside@ippf.org
Fon: +44 20 793 982 27

Ms Kathy Bonk
Executive Director
Communications Consortium Media
Center (CCMC)
(Contact for US journalists)
Email: kbok@ccmc.org
Fon: +1 202 326 6767 | Cell: +1 202 716
8959

Global Conference to Rejuvenate Conversation on Status of Women's Health and Rights

BERLIN, Aug. 28 — More than 400 delegates from around the world are expected to gather here next week for a new conversation assessing 15 years of work toward better sexual and reproductive health and rights for women in developing countries.

Global Partners in Action: a Non-Governmental Organization Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Development is set for 2-4 September at the Estrel Hotel Conference Center.

Preceded by a **Youth Forum** of young leaders on 1 September, the conference marks 15 years since the historic International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo brought about a seismic change in thinking on these issues. It moved the global debate from ideas of "control" and "demographics" to a focus on sexual and reproductive health and well-being, with a new emphasis on individual rights and gender equality.

Global Partners in Action will bring together field activists, young people, parliamentarians and representatives of donor countries, multilateral aid organizations and the private sector to start a new dialogue leading to a more vibrant movement. The theme: *Invest in Health, Rights and the Future*.

Conference findings will contribute to United Nations observations of ICPD@15 later this year.

An opening news conference is scheduled **Wednesday 2 September** at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which is co-hosting the Forum with UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. Please register for the news conference at the BMZ by Monday, August 31st 2009, 18h00, by phone: +49 30 2503 2870 or by e-mail: Doris.Lowack@bmz.bund.de.

Featured news conference and Forum speakers include:

Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development
Thoraya A. Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Helen Clark, Head of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Gill Greer, Director-General, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
Laura Villa Torres, Associate Youth Programming, Ipas
Nadita Das, Indian filmmaker, actor and activist

For inquiries about **registration**, please contact MediaCompany ngo-forum@mediacompany.com, Phone +49 (0)30-28 88 45 3 23. For other inquiries please contact Nora Gissel at nora.gissel@gtz.de, Phone +49 (0)30-726 14 407.

For **Forum accreditation**, visit http://www.globalngoforum.de/media_center/media_accreditation/

Visit the NGO Forum website at www.globalngoforum.org

Background

The Programme of Action of the 1994 ICPD drew strong criticism from religious and political opponents because it upset prevailing orthodoxies about women's reproductive rights and about ways to deal with rapid population growth and promote economic development. The so-called Cairo Consensus of the 179 governments attending that gathering recognised that comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, including voluntary family planning, is essential for individual and national development, and is also one of the most cost-effective routes for alleviating poverty.

Every international conference and re-evaluation of the Cairo Consensus since 1994 has reaffirmed those principles. The ICPD target of "universal access to reproductive health" was incorporated into Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 (improve maternal health) in 2007. The principles are widely viewed as central to achievement of all the other MDGs and share the MDG deadline of 2015.

The Programme of Action that emerged from ICPD offered a roadmap for the next 20 years. But 15 years on, have we followed that roadmap?

- > Over 200 million women want but currently lack access to modern contraceptives, and demand for contraception is expected to increase by 40% by 2050.
- > More than 1.5 billion people are now between 10 and 25 years old, the largest generation of young people in history. They will all need sexual and reproductive health education and services.
- > Some 33 million people now live with HIV, with 2.7 million new infections in 2007, most of which are sexually transmitted.
- > Every year, more than half a million women die in pregnancy or childbirth, including 67,000 from unsafe abortion. Millions more suffer injury, illness, or disability.

While the ICPD offered a visionary plan, political leadership and financial commitment to carry it out have been lacking. Between 1994 and 2008, global funding for reproductive health as a proportion of health aid dropped from 30% to 12%.

The challenges today are perhaps greater than those of 1994: a world financial crisis, climate change, increasing religious fundamentalism, and fragmented health systems, for example. The Global NGO Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development will act as a clarion call to reinvigorate the ICPD Programme of Action. Strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights is a pressing international need, one on which the future of humankind may well depend.