



## PRESS RELEASE

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## Investment in Women Critical to Development, Says UN Development Chief

**BERLIN, September 2** — The Millennium Development Goals can only be met if every country increases its investment in women's health and rights, the head of the United Nations Development Programme said today.

In a strong commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights for women, Helen Clark, former prime minister of New Zealand and now UNDP administrator, said she has asked her staff for a country-by-country assessment of gaps in progress toward achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and a list of what UNDP can do to help.

"We have no hope of reaching the MDGs if 50 percent of the world's people are not afforded equal opportunities," she told the opening plenary session here of *Global Partners in Action: a Non-Governmental Organization Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development*. "We recognize the linkages between these issues and every other aspect of development."

Some 400 non-governmental organization representatives from 131 countries convened here today to assess 15 years of progress since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development rewrote the global dialogue on those issues, placing investment in women at the center of cost-effective ways to slow population growth and promote sustainable development.

A recent United Nations report on overall global progress toward the MDGs showed that the one on improving maternal health (#5) lags furthest behind, Clark noted. "That speaks volumes about the low status still of women in far too many countries around the world," she said.

Yet global spending per woman on reproductive health care has declined with the recent economic crisis, she continued, despite repeated pledges from donor countries in international gatherings from the ICPD to the 2000 MDGs.

With six years left until the 2015 deadline for achievement of both the ICPD goals and the MDGs, "Development is a moral imperative," Clark said. "We must spare no effort to fulfill the vision of these very clearly linked sets of goals."

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