

**U.S. National Statement on UNFPA, Agenda Item 7
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board
August 31, 2015**

Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you to Dr. Osotimehin for his inspiring statement and continued strong leadership. We also salute UNFPA's dedicated staff around the world for their commitment to their critical work. The United States is pleased to be able to provide a consistent level of core funding through our voluntary contributions to support the essential work of the organization.

My delegation has spoken many times about the importance of addressing the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. We firmly believe UNFPA's mandate to increase access to sexual and reproductive health and promote reproductive rights is crucial to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that sets global development priorities for the next fifteen years. We must not forget that among all of the MDGs, progress on Goal#5 – to reduce maternal mortality and provide universal access to reproductive health – lags farthest behind. To fulfill this new development agenda, we must recognize the vital role that sexual and reproductive health care services play in ensuring healthy lives and eradicating poverty and, more important still, we must re-commit to ensure actions in addressing these needs, particularly for the most vulnerable.

We also know that reducing maternal mortality is an even greater challenge in crisis settings when essential health services are disrupted and an estimated 15 percent of displaced pregnant women may experience life-threatening obstetric complications. In fact, the WHO reports that eight of the ten countries with the highest maternal mortality ratios have experienced current or recent conflict. Other research shows that about 170,000 of the 290,000 annual maternal deaths worldwide occur during humanitarian emergencies.

These are very daunting statistics, which is why the United States has partnered with UNFPA, and other humanitarian organizations, to increase the rapid, reliable provision of safe birth and reproductive health kits, family planning commodities, as well as programs to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

UNFPA, along with other UN humanitarian partners, continues to respond to a record number of crises around the world. With five Level 3 crises over past year it was not surprising to learn that UNFPA's humanitarian funding more than doubled from \$41 million in 2013 to \$101 million in 2014. And figures for 2015 may be higher still. My government is proud to support UNFPA's efforts to respond to the ongoing crises in Syria, Ukraine, South Sudan, Iraq, and Nigeria.

To that end, we applaud UNFPA's efforts to strengthen its roster of qualified experts who can deliver sexual and reproductive health services, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and enable rapid responses that protect the health and well-being of women and girls in emergency situations. At today's informal consultation, we look forward to learning more about

UNFPA's revised strategy to prioritize and address gender-based violence in emergencies, and to deliver services to protect sexual and reproductive health.

We note UNFPA's efforts to strengthen the evaluation office over the last several years, and are grateful to management for their stated commitment to emphasize this critical function. While a three percent investment in evaluation is a laudable goal that will understandably take time to achieve, we note with concern that UNFPA spent only 0.37 percent of program expenditures on evaluation in 2014. We would appreciate more detail on how UNFPA plans to increase resources dedicated to evaluation. We also note with concern that staffing gaps persist in the evaluation office, gaps that appear to be turning into a chronic issue. We would appreciate more information about why open positions are so hard to fill, and what UNFPA management is doing to ensure that investment in the capacity of the evaluation office is commensurate with the significance of the office's function and role.

We are also pleased to note that the technical collaboration between the United States Agency for International Development and UNFPA remains strong. Through Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), USAID and UNFPA are supporting the rights of women and girls to decide freely, and for themselves, whether, when, and how many children they want to have. As co-chairs of the FP2020 Country Engagement Working Group and as co-focal points in many FP2020 countries, USAID and UNFPA are working closely to realize the global goal of increasing access to family planning by an additional 120 million women and girls by 2020.

We know that enlightened policies on sexual and reproductive health and effective programs are a matter of life and death for millions of women and girls around the world. It's clear we need strong global leadership to continue making progress. On this front, we look to UNFPA, Member State governments, and civil society to ensure that policies and programs are of the highest quality, based on what is needed, and what works for the world's most vulnerable people.

Thank you.