

February 10, 2005

The Honorable Kofi A. Annan  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
Secretariat Building, Room S-3800  
New York, NY 10017

Your Excellency Kofi Annan,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership in establishing the Millennium Project and for your recognition of the importance of reproductive health to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We fully concur with your statement that:

“The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that means stronger efforts to promote women’s rights, and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning.”

The Millennium Project has produced important recommendations for practical programs and policies in multiple sectors that will accelerate attainment of the MDGs in their overview report, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, and Task Force reports. We are pleased with the Millennium Project’s efforts to strengthen integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights concerns into implementation of the MDGs. The Gender Equality, the Child and Maternal Mortality and the HIV/AIDS Task Forces in particular recognized sexual and reproductive health and rights as fundamental to progress towards the Goals. The overall recommendation to strengthen health systems and address girls’ and women’s health (including reproductive health) rings clearly in their analyses. The contribution of the Project in these areas, and to encouraging priority to other neglected concerns (e.g., infrastructure, energy, multiple dimensions of women’s empowerment) is an indication of its wise counsel.

We strongly support the Project’s endorsement of universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including family planning; protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights as critical pathways to achieving the MDGs; and the recognition that highest levels of unmet need for family planning and reproductive health services occur in the poorest countries among the poorest populations.

We are encouraged by the strong statements of reaffirmation which emerged from the regional and other UN meetings held to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. We also note the outcomes of the Countdown 2015 Global Roundtable, the NGO-led review of the ICPD supported by the European Union, as a demonstration of additional international support for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Taken together, these statements demonstrate the international community’s continued commitment

to the ICPD Programme of Action and its goals. Through these meetings, governments also affirmed their view that implementing the ICPD Programme of Action is essential to achieving the MDGs.

In light of the Millennium Project's recommendations and continued strong international support for expanding access to sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV/AIDS services, we trust that sexual and reproductive health and rights concerns will be clearly addressed in your report for the General Assembly High-Level Plenary.

To this end, we recommend that your report:

- Include specific language on the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the overarching goal of reducing poverty;
- Endorse, as strongly as possible, the findings and recommendations of the Millennium Project and its Task Forces, including those regarding refinements of targets and indicators for the various goals;
- Acknowledge the international community's continued support for the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development's Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the agreements of the other major UN international conferences of the 1990s as foundations for the Millennium Development Goals and the importance of their realization to achievement of the MDGs.

Similarly, we recommend that the on-going technical review processes adopt specific recommendations of the Task Forces – in particular those of the Task Forces on Child Health and Maternal Health, on Education and Gender Equality, and on HIV/AIDS – including a specific target on universal access to reproductive health services under the Maternal Health Goal and several indicators relevant to sexual and reproductive health and rights within the indicator framework for various of the goals and targets.

We realize that the timeframe for finalization of the Secretary-General's report is very short, but we felt it was important to have the full benefit of the work of the Millennium Project – given its mandate – before communicating directly. Moreover, as the opportunities for civil society engagement in the Millennium Summit process are somewhat limited, we feel obliged to take advantage of every opportunity to share our concerns.

In conclusion, we note again our appreciation for your efforts to advance implementation of the MDGs, and in particular the work of the Millennium Project. We look forward to working with the UN system, UN Member States, and other civil society actors on our common agenda for development over the next decade and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

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