



Check against Delivery

Statement by
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Launch of *The State of World Population Report 2009*

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

Thank you for joining us today. It is a pleasure, once again, to be in The Hague, to launch *The State of World Population 2009* report from UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. This report has benefited from contributions from partners in the United Nations—the International Organization for Migration, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the UN Environment Programme.

I am also pleased to share with you the youth supplement, which has stories from young people at the frontier as they confront a changing climate.

Our 2009 State of World Population report is called *Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate*.

This report calls attention to women and vulnerable populations in the response to climate change.

The main point of this report is that people are affected by climate change. People need to adapt to it. And only people can stop climate change.

During the past half century, rapid population growth as well as industrialization have led to a steep rise in greenhouse gas emissions. We have now reached a point where humanity is approaching the brink of disaster.

Right now the carbon footprint of the poorest billion people on Earth is a mere 3 per cent of the world's total carbon footprint. And it is the poor who will bear the disproportionate brunt of our changing climate.

For many people, especially poor women in poor countries, climate change is here and now. Women work hard to keep their households together. They fetch the water, find the food and the fuel to cook it, and clean up afterwards. They watch their children's health and care for their illnesses.

In recent years, both food and fuel have been harder to find. The available water carries parasites. Malaria is creeping into areas that used to be mosquito-free. And floods, rising seas and drought present growing challenges.

Today, **poor women in poor countries are among the hardest hit by climate change even though they contributed the least to it.** Poor women don't take planes. They don't drive cars. As often as not, they can't find a vehicle to get them to hospital if they have a difficult labour. In fact, they get very little support for all they do.

This must change. As this report points out, support for women grappling with climate change means empowering them to take their own decisions and be involved in public decisions that affect their lives. Yes, countries need to invest in green technology and reduce emissions immediately and this is a focus for next month's conference in Copenhagen.

This report points out that **countries also need to invest in women** – in ensuring alternatives to wood and imported fuel, in secure clean water supplies, in better roads and mobile phones. Girls need education and health care. Women need attention to their own health, including their reproductive health. There are about 200 million women today who would like to space or prevent pregnancies, and who have no access to reliable and modern contraception.

Helping women to make their own decisions about family size would protect their health, make their lives easier, help put their countries on a sustainable path towards development – and ensure lower greenhouse-gas emissions in the long run.

We cannot successfully confront climate change if we neglect the needs, rights and potential of half the people on our planet.

The report also calls attention to populations that are vulnerable because they live in low-lying coastal cities. It calls attention to the impact of climate change on urbanization and migration, and the need for governments to plan ahead to reduce risk and to better prepare and manage climate disasters and the displacement of people.

We at the UN believe that climate change is not just an issue of energy or the environment; it is also a moral issue of equity. All nations and people have the right to development. And the United Nations is working with countries to achieve development that is socially equitable and environmentally sound.

Women should be an integral part of any agreement on climate change – not as an afterthought or because it's politically correct, but because it's the right thing to do.

Our future as humanity depends on unleashing the full potential of all human beings, and the full capacity of women, to bring about change.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to your questions. I ask that you please state your name and affiliation.