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PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT ON THE SIXTH MEETING OF WOMEN SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT

(Bern, 16-17 July 2010)

BERN INITIATIVE FOR GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARY ACTION ON MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Children and women die needlessly every day. Every minute of every day, one woman dies and 30 women suffer long-lasting injury or illness from preventable pregnancy-related causes and complications - including unsafe abortion and, 17 children die from preventable causes. Most of these deaths can be prevented through good policies, laws and adequate funding to promote and protect the health and well-being of women and children.

Two of the eight Millennium Development Goals seek to achieve this objective: MDG 4, on reducing child mortality, and MDG 5, on improving women's health. They are also the two goals whose attainment is the least on track.

As women Speakers of Parliament we commit to do our part to change this state of affairs and, working in partnership with men and women members of parliament, to make the achievement of MDGs 4 and 5 a high priority on the agenda of our parliaments. To this end, we propose to take all opportunities to:

- Advocate the development or strengthening of gender-equitable national health action plans and ensure that the three pillars that all health systems need to support maternal and newborn health are addressed: family planning, skilled care during delivery, and emergency care;
- Review and, where required, enact legislation with the objective of ensuring a national legislative framework that is aligned with international treaties, does not discriminate against women and girls, ensures their effective access to care regardless of their means, protects women from all forms of gender-based violence and children from abuse, violence and neglect;
- Hold debates and dialogues in parliament on women's and children's health before the national budget is drafted and submitted to parliament for adoption, as well as when the budget is considered and debated in parliament;
- Commission reports on the impact the budget will have on the achievement of MDGs 4 and 5; work to introduce gender-sensitive budgeting so that all members of parliament can know how the national budget affects men and women and meet their needs;

- Advocate fulfillment of international official development aid commitments, ensure that all official international aid, particularly towards the health sector, is provided through the national budget adopted by parliament and, for parliaments in donor countries, monitor their country's international development aid from this perspective;
- Monitor the implementation of the budget from the perspective of MDGs 4 and 5, enlist the support of the national audit institutions in this effort, make sure that data and information on maternal and child health is collected, and work to establish indicators to assess results;
- Undertake visits to facilities in the country, in particular in remote rural areas and the poorest parts of the country, and hold public hearings in parliament with the participation of women and children to assess the impact of health legislation, policies and budgets; and
- Promote women's empowerment through education and access to resources, sensitization of men and boys, including through the school curriculum, on equality and women's rights, and enhancing women participation in politics and decision-making.