Statement by
Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin
Executive Director
UNFPA

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

Colleagues and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Ambassador Thomson, on your election as President of the Executive Board. My colleagues at UNFPA and I look forward to working with you and the rest of the Bureau, Ambassador Tuvako Nathaniel Manongi of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Vincent Herlihy of Ireland, Ambassador Boyan Belev of Bulgaria, and Mr. Jonathan Viera of Ecuador during the course of 2014, a truly landmark year for human rights, population and development and for UNFPA, and a year in which our partnership and engagement with the Board will be especially vital.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Roble Olhaye of Djibouti and the outgoing Bureau for their leadership and guidance in 2013 and for challenging us to reflect on a number of important issues. This reflection has been crucial in building a more focused, results-driven, accountable organization ready to take on the critical challenges of 2014 and beyond.
The Strategic Plan that you approved last September, and which we begin implementing this year, equips us to respond more effectively and efficiently to emerging opportunities and challenges and to shifting needs. Its accompanying Integrated Budget ensures that the Fund’s resources are fully harmonized with our corporate priorities. This will be critical in our continued acceleration of progress on MDG5 as we approach the 2015 deadline.

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Mr. President,

Twenty years ago in Cairo 179 world leaders forged a groundbreaking consensus that changed the very terms of development. Delegates from all regions and cultures put individuals, their human rights and dignity, at the very heart of development, emphasizing that sexual and reproductive health is a fundamental human right.

They recognized that empowering women and girls is both the “rights” thing to do as well as one of the most reliable pathways to improved well-being for all.

Cairo shifted population policy and programmes from a focus on numbers to a focus on individual human lives and rights.

It marked a turning point on the path towards inclusive, equitable, sustainable development.
If there is one thing the ICPD@20 review process has shown us, it is that the Cairo Programme of Action is as relevant today as it was in 1994.

The results of the ICPD beyond 2014 review – which included a global survey of 183 countries and territories – underscore the criticality of the paradigm shift of Cairo and advance a new framework for population and development beyond 2014 that will be key to the post-2015 development agenda currently under discussion by the international community.

First, let’s look at just how far we’ve come over the past twenty years.

Fewer women are dying in pregnancy and childbirth, and more women have access to education, work and political participation.

More children, girls in particular, are going to school.

There are more laws protecting and upholding these and other human rights.

An estimated 1 billion people have moved out of extreme poverty.

But not all have benefited equally, as the review clearly shows.

We look forward to presenting you with the full global report by 10 February, but let me just preview here two of the most important messages we can draw from the results.
First, inequality, which excludes so many from the fruits of development, is growing. The gains we have made cannot be sustained or spread unless we address these persistent inequalities, which hit the poorest and most marginalized hardest. I will outline some of these inequalities in a moment, but a report issued last week by Oxfam speaks to the review findings on wealth inequality. According to Oxfam, the 85 richest people in the world own the same wealth as the 3.5 billion poorest people. It’s staggering.

The second message that I think we can draw from the review is that we must not be complacent. We cannot take human rights for granted.

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**Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment**

While most states are slowly progressing towards gender equality, in a number of countries the rights and autonomy of women are deliberately curtailed. And in no country are women fully equal to men in political, social or economic power.

Gender-based discrimination and violence continue to plague most societies.

People living with disabilities, indigenous people, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons diverse by sexual orientation and gender identity
continue to face discrimination – this despite the fact that a core message of Cairo was the right of all persons to development.

In the poorest communities, even in wealthier countries, maternal death, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and women’s overall status have seen little progress since 1994.

Poverty occurs in all countries, but women bear a disproportionate burden of its consequences, as do the children they care for.

The gender gap in labour force participation has narrowed slightly since 1990, but women continue to be paid less than men for equal work; and more often, to be vulnerably employed and excluded from decision-making.

Harmful practices, such as early, child and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, remain prevalent despite advances in legislation. Too often laws, where they exist, are not enforced and thus fail to protect women and girls.

Gender-based violence is an epidemic. An estimated one in three women worldwide report they have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse, mostly at the hands of an intimate partner.

The review found that most governments prioritize economic empowerment and employment of women over their political empowerment and participation.
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Health

When it comes to health, there have been huge gains in life expectancy at the global level, and the global under-five mortality rate fell by almost half between 1990 and 2012.

The past twenty years have seen significant progress in maternal and child health and family planning. Yet, 800 women a day still die in childbirth, and an estimated 8.7 million young women aged 15 to 24 resort to unsafe abortions each year.

The advent of anti-retrovirals has averted 6.3 million HIV and AIDS-related deaths, but new infections continue to rise, and declines have stalled in many countries.

There has been a dramatic shift in global health patterns between 1990 and 2010 towards non-communicable diseases and injuries, in many cases due to global ageing.

But poverty-related diseases such as communicable, maternal, nutritional and neonatal disorders persist in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Global efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services since 1994, including innovations in technologies, have led to significant improvements in many SRH
indicators. Yet these improvements mask significant inequalities both between and within countries, with progress in many countries limited to the wealthy. This highlights the unfinished agenda of ICPD.

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In 1990, sexual and reproductive health-related illness accounted for 14 per cent of the global burden of disease. By 2010, the burden had decreased across almost all regions, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa where it increased substantially due to HIV and AIDS. Poor people, particularly those living in Africa and South Asia, continue to experience the worst sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

In many countries, population growth has outstripped supply of health workers despite governments’ efforts to increase their numbers. 91 per cent of maternal deaths occur in 58 countries that face critical health worker shortages and the world needs an additional 7.2 million health workers to address the shortfall.

Skilled Birth Attendance increased 15 per cent worldwide between 1990 and 2010, yet the least progress has been made in sub-Saharan Africa where fewer than 55 per cent of women deliver with a skilled birth attendant, compared to more than 80 per cent of women in other regions.

Access to good maternal health care remains highly inequitable across regions and within countries, between poor and wealthier women and between women in urban and rural areas.
In general, fewer and fewer gains can be expected without serious improvements to the health systems of poor countries, and unless poverty is addressed and human rights are advanced.

There is no ‘silver bullet’, no technological innovation, no ‘quick fix’ that can address all these issues without tackling the grave inequality at their root.

There are also no one-size-fits-all solutions. While human rights must be upheld universally, concrete approaches must be country-specific.

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Adolescents and Youth

There are more young people than ever in the world today. In Africa, over 30 per cent of the population is between 10 and 24. How we meet the needs and support the aspirations of these young people will define the world’s future.

And today, the aspirations of young people are higher than ever before. With access to cell phones and the internet, many are better informed of their human rights and the inequalities they experience. Capitalizing on their aspirations will require deep investments in education and in access to sexual and reproductive health, enabling them to delay childbearing and acquire the training needed for long, productive lives.
Declining fertility rates are providing low- and middle-income countries with a window of opportunity because the proportion of the working-age population is historically high relative to the number of children and older people. Young people – if provided with education and employment opportunities – can spur enormous economic growth and development.

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Yet progress in meeting the needs of adolescents and youth since 1994 has been uneven.

Young people make up nearly 40 per cent of the total number of unemployed people globally. It is estimated that 600 million jobs need to be created in the next ten years to absorb current unemployment levels and provide employment opportunities to the 40 million people entering the labour market each year.

More girls are finishing primary school, but they are facing challenges in accessing and completing secondary education, a critical source of skills in changing economies.

For millions of girls, early marriage leads to the health risks of early childbearing and often an end to education.

As of 2010, 158 countries had a legal age of marriage of 18 years. Yet in the last 10 years, 34 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 in developing
regions were married or in unions before 18, and 12 percent before age 15.

Although adolescent birth rates declined from 1990 to 2010 across countries in all income groups and regions, worldwide, more than 15 million girls age 15 to 19 years give birth every year – one in five girls before they turn 18. Many of these pregnancies result from non-consensual sex, and most take place in early marriage.

Adolescents and youth are central to the development agenda post-2015 for both rich and poor countries, but fundamental for the inclusive and sustainable development of the global South. Safeguarding their rights and investing in their future by providing quality education, decent employment, effective livelihood skills, and access to SRH and comprehensive sexuality education is essential to their development and that of their families, communities and countries

Mr. President,

Changes in household composition, growing urbanization, widespread international migration and displacement are also having profound effects on individual dignity, wellbeing and sustainability. These bring profound implications for policymakers.

The drawing of young people into urban areas on a mass scale represents potentially unprecedented gains in their agency, freedom and
opportunity, but offers a host of vulnerabilities without social support or access to justice.

Migration also bears unique opportunities and risks for young women, providing them with access to higher education and the labour market, but exposing them to higher risks of sexual violence, trafficking and reproductive ill-health.

Migrants whose rights are protected are able to live with dignity and security and, in turn, are better able to contribute to their host and origin societies both economically and socially than those who are exploited and marginalized.

Changes in household composition and living arrangements, including the rise of single-person, primarily women-headed households, are changing the way networks and social support systems work in societies, both within and between generations.

**Governance and Accountability**

The Global Survey data show that governments around the world made progress in facilitating the civic participation of young people, women, persons with disabilities and older persons.

But greater efforts are needed to foster the free, inclusive, transparent participation of all population groups in the decisions that affect them.

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The capacity to monitor and project population dynamics and to integrate these into development is a core investment for dignity and human rights, but continues to be weak in many countries.

While there has been a 30 per cent gain since 2000, still only 1 in 3 births in developing countries is registered, with rural and poor populations facing the largest gaps. Without birth registration, there is no formal personhood, and without that, accessing and exercising rights is next to impossible.

Mr. President,

While economic growth has brought many out of poverty, it has left many behind and has come with enormous costs.

Finite natural resources continue to be depleted, driven in large part by consumption by the world’s wealthy. The poor bear most of the environmental costs, as well as the brunt of climate change impacts.

The need for sustainable development has never been more urgent. And our path to sustainability must bring equality and inclusiveness.

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We at UNFPA believe that that path runs straight through the ICPD Programme of Action.
This is a critical year for UNFPA, for population and development, for human rights and for reflecting these priorities in the new global sustainable development agenda. The challenge facing all of us – Member States, the UN, civil society – is how we work together to ensure that the global processes in 2014 – the Commission on Population and Development in April and the General Assembly Special Session in September, protect and advance the ICPD agenda and ensure that it is at the centre of the post-2015 development framework.

This is no time for complacency. We must be unwavering in our commitment to addressing these issues because there are those who would like to roll back the clock and reverse some of the hard-won gains of Cairo.

Since 1994, deep divisions, often under the guise of religious or cultural values but more often political, have become increasingly apparent, with human rights and the empowerment of women and girls a frequent touchstone of ideological difference.

As Dr. Nafis Sadik, the architect of the ICPD, has said:

“No cultural value worth the name permits or promotes the oppression and enslavement of women. No cultural value permits women to go without education or health care, including sexual and reproductive health…. No cultural value holds women up to
veneration as mothers while exposing them to death and disability in childbirth.”

So we must be vigilant. We cannot take the human rights gains of the past two decades for granted. We must protect and advance these gains and, where they are under threat, continue to raise our voices for the voiceless whose rights are most at risk.

Governments have played a key role as owners of the ICPD review process, and government leadership will be critical in seeing to it that the evidence gathered and the findings made inform the global development agenda going forward.

Working together, we can ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, the rights of adolescents and youth, and non-discrimination are critical elements of the post-2015 agenda.

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Mr. President,

Before closing, let me update you briefly on some of UNFPA’s other corporate priorities. As I mentioned earlier, we begin implementation of the new Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget this year. These tools, along with our cluster approach, will strengthen the coordinated implementation of our programmes so that we can perform better and deliver better to those we serve.
Recent years have seen strong efforts at UNFPA to improve results-based program management at all organizational levels, but more concerted efforts are needed to strengthen monitoring of program results. We have developed a concrete and realistic plan that will equip UNFPA by the end of 2014 to monitor and report efficiently and effectively on the core set of organizational programme and performance indicators, with clear and realistic targets.

As part of the fundamental reforms being implemented by UNFPA, the new global and regional interventions mechanism has a clear strategic vision, priorities, coherence, and a solid governance structure that ensures enhanced quality and oversight, and improved systems for resource allocation, monitoring and reporting.

We are assessing our funding architecture to ensure that all non-core resources, including the Thematic Trust Funds, are aligned with the Strategic Plan and our corporate priorities.

Diversified resource mobilization is key to ensuring the continuity and momentum of all of UNFPA’s work. We continue to work to expand our donor base, and are exploring new partnerships with emerging donors and the private sector.

As you know, when we meet again in June we will report to you on “concrete measures taken to emphasize the importance of broadening the donor base and increasing the number of countries and other partners
making financial contributions to” UNFPA, as mandated by the QCPR. With other funds and programmes we are hard at work on joint approaches.

We are very grateful for the high level of donor support to UNFPA over the years. The ICPD Review identifies enormous existing gaps in access to services and rights in many parts of the world. There is a daunting unfinished agenda in front of us, as these gaps and challenges make clear. Without sufficient core contributions, UNFPA’s crucial role in supporting women, girls and young people in the most difficult circumstances will be gradually undermined.

Ensuring service delivery, knowledge management and advocacy like UNFPA does on a daily basis in fragile contexts is currently impossible without funding from both core and non-core resources. We are also facing the unprecedented challenge of Level 3 emergencies in Syria, the Philippines and the Central African Republic. To fully operate in these complex situations, where the needs are the highest and at the same time most costly, we need a sustained level of core resources.

[Slide 11 – Philippines photo – to come]

In the Philippines, over 200,000 pregnant women were affected by the destruction of Typhoon Haiyan -- many of them are giving birth in extremely difficult circumstances. Every day, there are nearly 900 births in affected communities. UNFPA conducted medical missions
throughout affected areas and, for the first time, provided the government with an emergency maternity unit in a container. In the Central African Republic, UNFPA is leading the gender-based violence inter-agency sub-cluster and is committed to ensuring that protection mechanisms are strengthened. We have provided partners with post-rape kits to ensure that survivors can access lifesaving medical assistance. As the crisis unfolds in South Sudan, which has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world, UNFPA's mandate becomes ever more important.

Mr. President,

Let me reiterate that UNFPA is fully committed to UN system-wide coherence, including “Delivering as one,” as evidenced by the alignment of the new UNFPA Strategic Plan with the QCPR. UN reform and system-wide coherence continue to be key organizational priorities in implementing our new Strategic Plan.

Under the leadership of the DED (Management), the UNDG finalized the Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Wishing to Adopt the “Delivering as one” Approach (SOPs) in mid-2013. UNFPA continues to take a leadership role as we shift from planning together to delivering together and is leading Peer Support Groups in a number of regions to ensure quality assurance of UNDAFs.
The UNDG is about to endorse a Plan of Action to jointly address HQ-level bottlenecks – an initiative I am committed to actively promoting.

We are also strengthening existing partnerships within the UN family, for example, with UN Women on advancing women’s empowerment and gender equality, with UNICEF on FGM/C and other issues, and with WFP on maternal nutrition. And this year, through the DED-Programme, we are chairing the H4+ grouping, which is focused on delivery of the SG’s *Every Woman Every Child* strategy.

We will be discussing the evaluation results of the UNFPA/UNICEF joint programme on FGM/C shortly, along with the UNFPA transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2014-2015. So it is fitting that, at this point, I introduce and welcome our new Director of Evaluation, Andrea Cook.

We will also say goodbye in the coming months to three senior staff members – my right hand, Delia Barcelona, Chief of the Executive Office; Werner Haug, Director of UNFPA’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, and Neela Jayaratnam, the Ethics Advisor. On behalf of all of us at UNFPA, I’d like to thank Delia, Werner and Neela for their dedication and service and wish them well in the next chapter of their lives. I am pleased to advise that we have appointed Heimo Laakkonen as the incoming Director replacing Mr Haug. I would also
like to welcome Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, who assumed her duties as Director of the East and Southern Africa Regional Office in October.

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Mr. President,

A girl born today has a better chance of staying in school, avoiding motherhood in childhood, and having a safe child birth if and when she chooses to have a child than her sisters did two decades ago.

Depending on where she lives, she may have better access to life skills and opportunities for work outside the home than her mother did.

As a skilled, informed citizen, she may have a greater voice in decisions affecting her than her grandmother did and the ability to participate more fully in economic, political and social life.

But until these rights are universally realized, until these opportunities are available to all, until everyone is able to reach their full potential, humankind cannot advance, and truly equitable, sustainable development will remain out of reach.

This, then, is the ideal time to reaffirm the core message of the ICPD – that individual dignity and human rights are the bedrock of a resilient, sustainable future.
The path to sustainability is paved with equity and non-discrimination; with investments in health and education, particularly for women and young people; with universal access to sexual and reproductive health and secure reproductive rights; with choices and opportunities for all.

We have come a long way down this path since Cairo, but our journey is not over.

In 2014, let us re-commit ourselves to completing the journey and to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Thank you.