Mr. President,
Executive Director,
Members of the Executive Board,

We deeply appreciate that UNFPA is presenting the evaluation results of the UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme on female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) to the Executive Board, giving the Member States the possibility to discuss its findings as well as for organizing informal consultations on this theme last week.

As we all know the size of this phenomenon is alarming, with more than 125 million girls and women having undergone some form of FGM/C in Africa and the Middle East (there is evidence that some Latin American and Asian communities are also affected) while another 30 million girls are at risk of being cut in the next decade.

Girls’ and women’s health and their empowerment as well as the realization of their rights are negatively affected by FGMs and undesirable consequences of the practice are also undermining the achievement of related MDGs.

The evaluation results well inform about the UNFPA/UNICEF joint programme actions during 2008-2013 to eliminate FGMs. We concur with the overall positive results achieved but also believe that particular attention should be paid to the highlighted weaknesses.

As main strengths of the programme, we recognize its capacity in generating additional understanding on the approach for the abandonment of the practice. It also provides the basis for a holistic, culturally sensitive approach and human-rights-based model that encompasses the understanding of FGM/C as a social norm.

We also value positively the strategies and engagement of the Joint Programme in global advocacy to achieve its results through the Commission on the Status of Women, CEDAW and the Rights of the Child Committees, the Donors Working Group on FGM/C, which met in Rome for its annual meeting last October.

In line with the recommendations made in the General Assembly resolution 67/146, last October, the Government of Italy hosted, in Rome, more than 30 Governments, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, human rights advocates, regional
intergovernmental institutions and United Nations agencies, which participated at the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilations, organized jointly with UNFPA and UNICEF. Participants agreed on actions to move forward the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/146 by in particular, accelerating the adoption and enforcement of legal and policies frameworks that advance gender equality; strengthening multisectoral and collective responses to go to scale with the abandonment of female genital mutilations; increasing resources and enhancing accountability for eliminating female genital mutilations. Against this background, the participants extensively discussed the results of the past phase of the Joint Programme and identified key areas for the next one. The outcome of the Conference has been circulated as a document of the Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly (A/68/640).

The evaluation report provides clear recommendations for the second phase of the Joint Programme to overcome current weaknesses. In particular, to bring this initiative to scale and achieve its objective, we trust that UNFPA and UNICEF will adequately address monitoring and reporting requirements (i.e. indicators and baselines) and the sustainability of achievements, not only financially but also in terms of permanence of abandonment. Financial sustainability for ending this practice must also be pursued by fully including the acceleration of FGMs abandonment into the Country Programme documents relevant to those affected by FGMs. Specific operational thinking should also be applied to areas and dynamics within the regional scope of action of the initiative. UNFPA and UNICEF should better clarify, when expanding working partnerships with other UN agencies, their added value to programme activities.

Lastly, Mr. President,

The transformation currently under way in partner countries, as well as at the global level, to eliminate this practice has gained momentum, and we can say that millions of girls have been spared the fate of their mothers and grandmothers.

Italy is confident that through the next phase of the Joint Programme on FGM/C the social change already initiated will be leveraged, the momentum generated will be further consolidated and activities brought to scale. The 10,000 African communities, which have proclaimed FGM abandonment, will be an important testimony to the many more which are still practicing.

We are excited about the collective and individual role we have taken on to achieve this result but we should not forget that the challenge of eliminating female genital mutilations remains enormous. Efforts need to be stepped up in the areas of advocacy, policy dialogue and technical assistance to encourage the full and irreversible elimination of this harmful practice. Together we can meet this challenge
and contribute, including through the Joint Programme, to having gender equality incorporated in the Strategic Plans of the Funds as a central dimension as well as to the Post 2015 agenda. Italy stands ready to continue to play its part, including through the financial support of the second phase of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM/C.

Thank you Mr. President.