



6 September 2005

## **The Rights of Women and Girls Must be Central in Australia's UN Statement Next Week**

### ***Key Australian Aid Agencies Call for Action at UN World Summit September 14–16***

As the UN World Summit from September 14–16 approaches, key Australian development agencies are calling on Australia to maintain the focus on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to support gender equality in its country statement at the summit.

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, the International Women's Development Agency, Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia and Marie Stopes International Australia, call on the Federal government to stand firm on the commitments it has made to the human rights of women and girls through gender equality, women's empowerment and the promotion and protection of the human rights including the reproductive rights of women and girls in achieving sustainable development.

These commitments were agreed to by the Australian Government at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 — reaffirmed by Prime Minister John Howard in October 2004, adopted again by the Australian government through the Beijing Declaration in 1995 — adopted again at the Millennium Summit in 2000—and reaffirmed again at the Beijing +10 UN Conference (Commission for Status for Women), in March this year.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, Chris Richards said, "In less than a week the 2005 World Summit will bring together more than 170 Heads of State and Government to discuss the future of the UN and the MDGs. This Summit represents a crucial moment for UN Member States to demonstrate their commitment to the UN Millennium Project goals and targets that address the many dimensions of extreme poverty.

"In August this year, a Declaration for the 14 September Summit was released, drafted under the leadership of Jean Ping of Gabon, President of the UN General Assembly, during a year of international negotiations and consensus-building.

"Australia must reject any efforts to undermine any discussion on the MDGs and reaffirm the August 5 Draft Summit Outcome Document particularly in regard to universal access to sexual and reproductive health.

“Australia must not be persuaded to change the whole emphasis of the Summit away from the achievement of the MDGs or that will be a disaster for women around the world — most especially in our region where the HIV/AIDS pandemic is unfairly impacting on young women”, Ms Richards added.

Suzette Mitchell, CEO of the International Women’s Development Agency said, "The International Women's Development Agency calls on the Australian government to ensure that the dialogue at the summit places women's equality firmly at the centre of efforts to alleviate poverty and build peace and security in our region and globally."

Julie Mundy, CEO, Marie Stopes International Australia, said,"It is now widely understood and accepted, that the basic human right of access to reproductive health and family planning is fundamental both to the alleviation of poverty and to the achievement of the millennium development goals. Just because sexual health is an often sensitive and challenging topic does not mean it should not be addressed, with courage and clarity.

“Australia has the responsibility and opportunity at the UN World Summit to help ensure that people globally have the same rights that we in Australia take for granted. In this respect, Australia can reflect and support the aspiration of nations in our region”, Ms Mundy added.

Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia Vice-President, Dr Devora Lieberman, said, “Australia needs to be clear that the most effective way to improve the quality of life for women around the globe is to ensure universal access to family planning services”.

While world leaders meet in New York from the 14-16 September:

- 1,094,400 women will become pregnant
- 547,200 women will experience an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy
- 316,800 women will experience a pregnancy related complication
- 115,200 women will have an unsafe abortion
- 2,880 women will die during childbirth or pregnancy complications
- only two percent of the world’s land will be owned by women

**For Interviews Please Call:**

**Australian Reproductive Health Alliance — Christina Richards + 61 427 884 479**

**International Women’s Development Agency — CEO Suzette Mitchell**

**+ 61 425 712 478**

**Marie Stopes International Australia — CEO Julie Mundy + 61 3 9525 2411.**

**Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia — Dr Devora Lieberman**

**+ 61 418 968 810**

**For more information please ring Julia Dean, Media Officer Australian Reproductive Health Alliance on +612 6282 8922 or +61 400 480 205**



**NGO Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations**

PO Box 41, Deakin West, ACT 2600 | 4 Champion St, Deakin ACT 2600 Australia

tel +61 2 6282 8922 | fax +61 2 6282 8933 | email [arha@arha.org.au](mailto:arha@arha.org.au) | web [www.arha.org.au](http://www.arha.org.au) | ABN 26 438 965 251