

Remarks by Mr. Nesim Tumkaya, UNFPA Officer-in-Charge in Cambodia
At the
Women Parliamentarians Seminar
On Accelerating the Achievement of MDG 4 and 5

10 March 2011

- Excellency Dr. Bun Rany Hun Sen, President of the Cambodian Red Cross and National Champion for HIV/AIDS and Women's and Children's Health
- Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Men Sam An, Chairwoman of the Cambodian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, CAPPD;
- Honorable Members of Parliament from AIPA Member Countries;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

Thank you for inviting me to address you, on behalf of UNFPA, on the auspicious occasion of this seminar on

Accelerating the Achievement of MDG 5 through the role of Women Parliamentarians. I would like to thank the Cambodian Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development for organizing this important seminar and to acknowledge the presence of parliamentarians from AIPA countries. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the First Lady, Excellency Dr. Bun Rany Hun Sen, which reflects Cambodia's strong commitment to promoting maternal health.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that works to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. UNFPA also promotes the use of population data in national plans and programs to reduce poverty. We work in more than 100 countries worldwide, including 36 countries in the Asia and Pacific region, where we support national governments to

address reproductive and maternal health, gender and population and development issues.

All of us are here today because we recognize that this is a critical time in our efforts to achieve MDG5's two targets of improved maternal health and universal access to reproductive health services by 2015. Around the world, it is estimated that about one thousand women die of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth every day. Although maternal mortality has fallen in almost all the countries in this region, it is still unlikely that most countries will achieve the key target of the Millennium Development Goal 5 for Improving Maternal Health. Even in those countries where progress is good, we need to look more closely at the national statistics which often mask significant inequities between regions and communities and between economic quintiles within the country. The indicators for maternal health indeed show a significant

difference, with Maternal Mortality Rates being disproportionately high among the poor.

There are three proven interventions to reduce maternal mortality. Family planning, can prevent 30% – 40% of maternal deaths by avoiding unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions. Family Planning needs to be complemented by skilled care at every birth and access to emergency obstetric care to prevent deaths from complications of pregnancy. In addition, maternal mortality reflects the functioning of the health system, which is often under-funded and lacking adequate skilled human resources. A well functioning health system has several building blocks including governance, information, financing, service delivery, human resources, medicines and technologies.

Two key concerns in our region are adequate financing for maternal and newborn health, including measures to

overcome the financial barriers that prevent poor people accessing health services, and ensuring a continuous supply of reproductive health commodities, including contraceptives.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We know what we need to put in place in order to make a significant improvement in maternal health and universal access to reproductive health in our region. We have many positive achievements to build upon. However, if we want to make this happen in the five years remaining before we are called to account for the achievements of MDGs, there must be a higher level of political commitment, efforts and investments focused on women's health.

As Shiv Khare has already described, Parliamentarians have a vital role to play in ensuring that maternal health stays at the top of the political agenda and is properly

resourced, in promoting accountability and providing leadership to communities and societies in valuing women's lives and health. I hope that this seminar will be an opportunity for women Parliamentarians from this region to share experiences and to commit to concrete strategies to accelerate the achievement of MDG5. Such acceleration can only be achieved through effective partnerships among relevant stakeholders, and UNFPA looks forward to our continuing partnerships with Parliamentarians, national governments, civil society and communities in pursuit of our shared conviction that no woman should die giving life.

Thank you.