

Working towards the reduction of perinatal and neonatal mortality

The Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolution WHA58.31 advocating universal coverage of maternal, newborn and child health interventions;

Recalling the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5, with their targets to reduce, between 1990 and 2015, under-five mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters;

Recognizing the importance of the Global Strategy for Woman's and Children's Health launched in September 2010 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and welcoming the report of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health;

Recognizing the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, which reflects the growing international interest in and attention to this issue, and whose objective is to coordinate and intensify national, regional and global activities along the continuum of care for maternal and child health to achieve the Millennium Development Goals;

Taking into account the request by Member States to implement the WHO Regional Strategies;

Aware that WHO Member States have undertaken a number of actions and programmes to reduce perinatal and neonatal morbidity and mortality and meet the targets set out by the Millennium Development Goals, developing their respective *National Plans for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality*, to improve equitable access, timeliness, continuity and quality of health care for women of childbearing age and newborns;

Noting the conclusion of the World Health Assembly [see A64/11 Para 6 and Para 4] that there has been insufficient and uneven progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 5 and an increase in the maternal mortality ratio in a number of countries, and that, while there has been progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 4 in terms of the reduction of child mortality, progress has stagnated in relation to the reduction of perinatal and neonatal mortality;

Concerned by the limited resources for disease prevention and treatment of newborns in developing countries, which contribute to high perinatal and neonatal mortality rates;

Recognizing the evidence that early and exclusive breastfeeding significantly reduces perinatal and neonatal mortality and recalling, in this regard, the importance of the implementation of the global strategy for infant and young child feeding and resolution WHA63.23 and other related resolutions;

Recognizing that perinatal and neonatal mortality is a significant social and economic burden that seriously affects countries and in particular developing countries, that rates should be reduced both by preventing the most common problems such as prematurity, sepsis and respiratory conditions, and also by implementing basic, high-impact and low-cost interventions founded on solid scientific evidence;

Recognizing that universal access to cost-effective perinatal and neonatal health interventions, including through the application of outreach, family, community and facility-based prevention, promotion and treatment services, significantly reduces a huge proportion of perinatal and neonatal deaths worldwide;

Aware that meeting the targets of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 will require intense health and intersectoral efforts with a high level of political commitment,

1. URGES Member States:

- (1) to ensure that health authorities in countries with high perinatal and neonatal mortality rates use their stewardship and leadership to involve other institutions and sectors, to strengthen capacity to achieve a greater reduction in avoidable neonatal and perinatal mortality in the context of improving the continuum of maternal and child health;
- (2) to further promote political commitment for effective implementation of the existing national, regional and/or global plans with the application of evidence-based strategies and interventions, including the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, to improve perinatal and neonatal health and increase equitable access to quality maternal, newborn and child health services;
- (3) to advance perinatal and neonatal care as a priority and develop, as appropriate, plans for universal access to cost-effective interventions, including actions to address sepsis and nosocomial infections, information and behaviour change communication, skilled birth attendants and early postnatal care and early and exclusive breastfeeding;
- (4) to strengthen the perinatal and neonatal mortality surveillance system including data and vital statistics collection as well as monitoring and reporting mechanisms;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to continue to raise awareness within the international community about the global burden of perinatal and neonatal mortality and promote, based on current best practices, targeted plans to increase access to high quality and safe health services to prevent and treat perinatal and neonatal conditions within an integrated mother and child health package including reproductive health;
- (2) to strengthen regional and country level institutional capacity and human resources (including skilled birth attendants and essential newborn care, including the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, to identify innovative solutions, and promote research to address the main

causes of perinatal and neonatal mortality such as prematurity, sepsis, respiratory conditions and infections, in particular of nosocomial origin;

(3) to support coordination of actions with WHO relevant entities and United Nations agencies and other stakeholders and strengthen or build partnerships to promote intra and interregional collaboration in order to enhance effectiveness of action in this specific area;

(4) to provide Member States with the necessary assistance and technical advice to develop and implement national policies, plans and strategies for the prevention and reduction of perinatal and neonatal mortality, and related maternal morbidity and mortality;

(5) to report to the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly on progress achieved in connection with the agenda item concerning the Millennium Development Goals.

Tenth plenary meeting, 24 May 2011
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