



United Nations Population Fund

77th World Health Assembly

Agenda Item 11.7

Statement by UNFPA, the UN Sexual and Reproductive Health Agency

Agenda Item 11.7: Acceleration towards the Sustainable Development Goal targets for maternal health and child mortality (*Document A77/4*)

Thank you chair,

The persisting rate of maternal and newborn mortality and stillbirths across the world is a global health emergency. Recent data reveal alarming trends, with progress towards reducing maternal deaths stagnating and, in some regions, reversing. This is a strong reminder that millions of women continue to face preventable risks and complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Every single day, since 2016, an estimated 800 women have died from complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth, most of which are preventable.

UNFPA welcomes the adopted World Health Assembly Resolution on maternal health and newborn mortality, initiated by Somalia and co-sponsored by 23 other Member States. This resolution is a crucial step towards accelerating progress in maternal and child survival.

Echoing the resolution, UNFPA advocates for a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that prioritizes high-impact interventions to address the multi-faceted challenge of high maternal mortality rates:

1. Ensure universal access to **integrated, affordable, quality, comprehensive and respectful sexual and reproductive health and maternal and newborn health care**; including preventing early and unintended pregnancy, prevent unsafe abortions, ensuring access to antenatal, intrapartum, emergency and postpartum care.
2. We must recognise that **midwives** play a critical role in providing quality sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent health services. Investing in midwifery models of care, education, employment, regulation, and retention is essential to **strengthening health systems** and improving maternal and newborn outcomes.
3. We must strengthen political, financial and performance accountability to ensure health for all. This includes setting national and subnational outcome and coverage targets for sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent health.

Working with WHO and our sister agencies, UNFPA is committed to ending preventable maternal deaths.

UNFPA is dedicated to ending preventable maternal deaths. We work to foster **enabling environments** for comprehensive SRHR, **strengthen health systems** to provide accessible, high-quality maternal and newborn health services - with a particular focus to improving midwifery capacity and quality maternal

health commodities, including through the UNFPA Supplies Partnership and **empowering women and girls** to exercise their right to **bodily autonomy**.

UNFPA **welcomes the inclusion of midwifery models of care** and the education, employment, regulation and retention of the health and care workforce in this resolution. Trained midwives are able to deliver 90% of all essential sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent services across the life course and save 4.3 million lives a year by 2035. Despite this evidence, midwives are currently underrepresented in the global health workforce, with a shortage of approximately 900,000, particularly in low-income countries. Standardizing midwifery education and meeting international (ICM) requirements are vital. Also, addressing mistreatment and discrimination in childbirth, especially in low- and middle-income countries, is critical for encouraging facility-based deliveries.

The Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) and Strategies for Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM) have reinforced the **SDG maternal and newborn mortality reduction targets and detail additional targets** related to coverage of essential services and milestones.

UNFPA remains steadfast in our commitment to improving maternal and newborn health and wellbeing. You can count on our support to implement the recommendations in this resolution alongside our sister-agencies, strengthened through the reinvigorated national leadership which this resolution promotes.

Thank you.