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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT BY H.E. LYNNE FEATHERSTONE, MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Check against delivery

Thank you, Chair.

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here with you all to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of this agreement.

The ICPD programme of action was vital in embodying international consensus that population is about people, not numbers.

And in doing so it recognised that the only way to achieve sustainable development is through upholding, and respecting, the human rights of individuals.

As we have heard, twenty years on, we have made remarkable progress: fewer women now die giving birth, gender parity in primary education has improved, and extreme poverty has decreased.

However, we cannot afford to be complacent.

The ICPD recognised that sustainable development cannot be achieved if half of the global population is left behind, and this review shows we are still some way from achieving gender equality.

Investing in the health of women and girls is at the foundation of their empowerment.

That is why the UK supports Cairo’s vision of a world where all women have choice over the size and timing of their families, where no woman dies giving birth, where all newborns survive and thrive, and where there are zero new HIV infections.

Our international work focuses on enabling women to have voice, choice and control.

There is still too much resistance to the simple notion that women and girls have the right to decide what happens to their own bodies.

We need to break this assumption that others somehow have the right to decide on the bodily integrity of individuals.

We cannot afford to ignore evidence, even if that evidence presents uncomfortable truths.