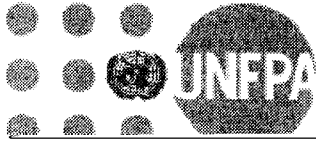


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Mr Chairman.

Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

Today I would like to speak about where we stand 15 years after the International Conference on Population and Development and nearly 15 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Protecting women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is essential to women's empowerment and gender equality and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

Advancing the right to sexual and reproductive health is crucial for eliminating extreme poverty, combating AIDS, and improving maternal health.

Today I would also like to highlight two issues that demand our urgent attention: The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and the urgent need to unite to end violence against women and girls.

In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work—often unpaid and unrecognized, being confronted with violence—both physical and sexual, and their lack of power and influence in decision-making.

As champions of women's rights, we can no longer allow women to bear the

Let us work together to create a world where women and men enjoy equal opportunity and equal rights, and equal partnership and equal responsibilities in their productive and reproductive lives.

Our challenge now is to translate words into action to ensure accountability, to end impunity and strengthen the rule of law. We need to work with communities to build a culture of equality, mutual respect and shared responsibility between women and men, girls and boys.

We know that none of the world's problems can be solved without the full and equal participation of women. From farming fields to formulating policy, from conceiving to consolidating peace and security, from providing