

## UN chief urges funding of health care to cut large number of maternal deaths



23 September 2009 – No woman should die needlessly in childbirth with the resources and technology available in the world, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon **told** a high-level gathering on the margins of the General Assembly today.

Every year more than half a million women die from complications in childbirth or pregnancy, the equivalent of one woman dying every minute, and almost all of them are in the developing world. In addition 10 million children under the age of five die each year.

Mr. Ban reported that progress has been made towards reaching internationally agreed targets – known as the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**) – for drastically cutting maternal mortality rates and improving child health by the deadline of 2015.

“But we still have a long way to go to reach the goal of reducing child mortality rates by two thirds by the year 2015,” he told an event co-hosted by the United Kingdom on innovative financing for health systems. “And we have a long road to travel to reduce maternal mortality.

“In a world in which we can map the human genome and send vehicles to far reaches of space, surely we can rally the technology, wealth and expertise need to meet these life-saving targets,” he said, adding that “it is inexcusable that we haven’t already.”

The Secretary-General noted that the goals are achievable and that the international community has the know-how to save lives and improve the health of women and babies.

According to the report of the Task Force on Innovative International Finance for Health Systems, global investment of \$36 to \$45 billion dollars is needed to meet the health-related MDGs by 2015.

“Study after study shows that investing in women brings broad economic and social benefits,” Mr. Ban told the meeting. “Devoting resources to women’s health in particular is one of the smartest investments any society can make.”

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown co-hosted the event, “Investing in Our Common Future: Healthy Women, Healthy Children,” alongside World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

The year-long efforts by the Task Force to raise money for health systems has resulted in securing a \$5.3 billion deal to improve health services across the developing world.

In addition, Burundi, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, and Sierra Leone have announced that they will expand access to health services, giving 10 million more people access to free health care.

Meanwhile, the UK and other donors set out their commitment to support countries in scrapping health 'user fees,' which could ensure millions of people will be able to visit health professionals for free for services ranging from basic check-ups to life-saving treatment.

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