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Pledges alone not enough to improve health of women and children – UN chief

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre) briefs press in Geneva

26 January 2011 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today stressed the importance of tracking the resources pledged for improving the health of women and children with the results they are intended to achieve, stating that accountability is vital to saving more lives.

"The world's women and children need more than pledges," Mr. Ban told reporters in Geneva before the first meeting of the Accountability Commission for Women's and Children's Health.

"Commitments are wonderful, generous, but by themselves they cannot build health clinics or immunize children."

At a major UN development summit in New York in September 2010, participants adopted the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, committing $40 billion in resources to a global effort to save the lives of 16 million women and children by 2015.

The Commission, co-chaired by Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, will develop an accountability framework that will help countries monitor where resources go and how they are spent, and will provide the evidence needed to show which programmes are the most effective to save the lives of women and children.

“This Accountability Commission is a crucially important part of the picture. When it comes to ambitious development efforts like this, it is not enough to just collect pledges of funds,” said the Secretary-General, who set up the body last month.

“That is why we have made accountability a hallmark of the Global Strategy. We are determined to hold ourselves and everyone else involved accountable.

“This is how: we will track how many promises are kept. We will monitor what we are doing with the funds that do come in. We will ensure that progress is made across the spectrum, and where we fall short, we will be open about that, too.

“Our aim is simple: to turn our Global Strategy into global action for women and children’s health,” Mr. Ban stressed.

Co-chaired by the Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Hamadoun Touré, and the Director-General of the UN World Health Organization (WHO), Margaret Chan, the Commission is expected to present its final report by May.

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