

STATEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS DELIVERED TO THE 15TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

WE the members of African Civil Society comprising organizations working on, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation, gender, youth, human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development issues in Africa;

HAVING MET in Kampala, Uganda from July 14th to 16th, 2010 for the Civil Society Organizations Pre Summit meeting organized by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) to discuss issues affecting Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa;

EXPRESSING our appreciation to the President of Uganda, His Excellency **Yoweri Kaguta Museveni** and the people of Uganda for their warm hospitality and support during our meeting;

WE SHARE the grief and sympathise with the families affected by the July 11th tragedy;

AFFIRMING our role as key actors in supporting the work of our governments towards achieving Africa's developmental goals, particularly in providing reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health services, sensitizing communities, providing a voice to the voiceless, offering innovative perspectives on the challenges we are facing as a continent and building links between the community and government;

NOTING that most African countries are off track in meeting the MDG targets on maternal, infant and child health. **ASHAMED** that Africa continues to lose an average of 800 women due to pregnancy and child birth-related complications and 13,000 newborns every day - a situation that undermines the achievement of the other MDG targets thus slowing development progress on the continent;

APPRECIATING the efforts made by Member States and the African Union to reduce Maternal, Newborn and Child mortality in the continent especially through the Maputo Plan of Action and the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) among others;

RECOGNIZING that high rates of Maternal, new born and child mortality are determined by policy choices and implementation and that African countries do not pay enough attention to these issues. Recognizing also that this is evidenced by the failure of governments to improve overall health investments including not adhering to the 15% Abuja Declaration budgetary allocation commitment to financing health care as well as to address the critical shortage of skilled health care providers;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that there are a number of obstacles to progress in many African States such as poor provision of reproductive health services and rights, child care services, safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene, nutrition and food yet they critical to achieve both maternal and child health;

ACKNOWLEDGING that guaranteed access to family planning services can hugely contribute to reduction of maternal, newborn and child mortality in Africa;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that unsafe abortion is a major cause of maternal death among young girls and women;

COGNISANT that for effective reduction of maternal, newborn and child mortality in Africa, the role of women is key thus steps must be taken to strengthen effective participation of women in decision-making processes;

BEING AWARE of the increasing risk associated with reliance on external sources of financing for the health sector;

FURTHER COGNISANT that social and economic development are pillars of peace and security which in turn are fundamental in creating an environment for provision of maternal, infant and child health services;

We the African Civil Society call upon African governments to:

- Develop and implement costed maternal, newborn and child health accelerated plans in order to meet the MDG targets. Nation plans should focus on proven packages and interventions;
- Strengthen the health and community systems to provide universal, comprehensive, integrated, maternal, newborn and child health care services, in particular through revitalization of primary health care, repositioning of family planning including reproductive health commodity security, infrastructure development, skilled human resources, prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT), HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis with other infectious diseases;
- Increase domestic resources for health including: improving per capita investment to meet or exceed the WHO recommended minimum of USD 40 per capita; to meeting the Abuja target of at least 15% of budget allocation for the health sector: and also earmarking an amount for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health; as well as mobilize resources through innovative health-financing and ensuring efficient and effective use of health resources including progress reviews of the Abuja Commitments at continental and country level;
- Prevent unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion by paying particular attention to address adolescent and youth needs related to reproductive health to prevent;

- Integrate previous commitments on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) with maternal and child health, and prioritize and adequately resource at national level;
- Strengthen systems and accountability mechanisms to support citizens' participation, leading to improved governance in WASH and maternal and child health in Africa;
- Develop a multi-sectoral approach to address issues of Food and Nutrition and MNCH. There should be harmonisation between AU initiatives, International and national commitments on Food and Nutrition and MNCH;
- Provide skilled care and management to prevent maternal and child mortality. Health care profession should be made attractive to avoid brain drain. Furthermore invest in and foster innovative approaches to scientific thinking among the youth to ensure a sustained interest in the field of health care;

We the African civil society organizations commit to mobilize ourselves to establish a regional platform to promote maternal, newborn and child health in Africa. We further commit to work with governments and all other stakeholders to accelerate the attainment of the MDG.

We need to act now! No woman should die while giving life!

Done at this 16 day of July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda