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Political Leaders Call for Resolve, Spur Action at First Annual Geneva Policy Dialogue for Reproductive Health

New 'Resolve Award' to Recognize Government Innovation in Reproductive Health

(GENEVA, May 18, 2011) – The first-ever Geneva Policy Dialogue for Reproductive Health, a side event during the World Health Assembly, resulted in a chorus of calls by policy makers, health program leaders government leaders and global agencies to increase investments that accelerate improvement of reproductive health, decrease poverty and achieve lasting development.

Co-sponsored by Aspen Global Health and Development (GHD) and the World Health Organization Department of Reproductive Health and Research, the event brought together senior leaders from lowest-income countries, donor countries, UN agencies, and civil society to share best practices in accelerating progress toward universal access to reproductive health.

From deploying more than 30,000 community-based health workers throughout Ethiopia to the role of Public-Private Partnerships in increasing contraceptive commodity security in Rwanda, speakers highlighted important achievements in policy, financing, and service expansion that have improved access to reproductive healthcare.

Speakers included:

- **Vice Admiral Regina Benjamin**, U.S. Surgeon General
- **Dr. Flavia Bustreo**, Assistant Director-General of Family and Community Health, World Health Organization
- **Ms. Peggy Clark**, Executive Director of Aspen Global Health and Development
- **Honorable Nils Daulaire**, Director, Office of Global Health Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- **Honorable Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Minister of Health, Ethiopia
- **Dr. Gill Greer**, Director-General, International Planned Parenthood Federation
- **Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda**, General Secretary, World YWCA
- **Dr. Mike Mbizvo**, Director of the Department of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization
- **Dr. Fidele Ngabo**, Director of the of the Maternal and Child Health Unit, Ministry of Health, Rwanda
- **Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin**, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund
- **Dr. Sudha Sharma**, Secretary of Health and Population, Nepal

The meeting was hosted by Ambassador Betty King, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, at the U.S. Mission. The U.S. Government's new Global Health Initiative has a women and girl-centered approach, emphasizing integration and maternal and child health. "First, listen to women. Second, empower women. Third, follow women. These are the three things that make the biggest difference in improving the health of societies and of individuals," said Honorable Nils Daulaire, Director of the Office of Global Health Affairs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Progress in reproductive health is progress for development, speakers noted. Every dollar spent on reproductive health and family planning services returns \$1.40 in savings on maternal and newborn health care costs. And the benefits go much further:

- Women realize their potential – With fewer unintended pregnancies, more girls complete their education, more women join the labor force and women increase their earning power.
- Families prosper – When parents have access to reproductive health care and can plan their families, they can make greater investments in their children’s nutrition, education and health.
- Economies grow – Countries that invest in reproductive health for the long term significantly boost their GDP.

Despite these proven benefits, many countries have not delivered on their promises to fully fund reproductive health programs. Each day nearly 1,000 women die from pregnancy complications. And more than 200 million who want access to family planning still cannot get it, resulting in unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and maternal health complications.

As part of the meeting, Aspen GHD announced the creation of the Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health Resolve Award, which will be given each spring at the World Health Assembly to honor government innovation and progress toward achieving universal access to reproductive health. GHD is the secretariat of the Council, which is comprised of 16 sitting and former heads of state and other leaders (www.globalleaderscouncil.org/resolveaward).

“The Resolve Award will shine a spotlight on nations and leaders with breakthrough innovations in meeting reproductive health needs,” said Peggy Clark, Executive Director of Aspen Global Health and Development at The Aspen Institute. “We will celebrate these important investments that save the lives of women, improve family health, lift communities out of poverty and promote economic prosperity.”

The Global Leaders Council will release formal criteria for the Resolve Award along with nomination instructions in the fall of 2011. Council leaders will present the award at the 2012 event of the Geneva Policy Dialogue Series for Reproductive Health, to take place during the 2012 World Health Assembly.

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EDITORS: Photos and videos from the event will be made available. Contact Lyndon Haviland at lyndon@havigland.net or +1-860-575-7691.

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