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# Inaugural world women's health and development forum

**Post-2015: Desired Outcomes**

**11 - 12 February 2015**

**United Nations Headquarters**

# **DECLARATION**



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We, participants gathered at the Inaugural World Women’s Health and Development Forum held by the Royal Academy of Science International Trust, in close collaboration and partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in the context of the Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970), the Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary-General entitled “The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda” (A/69/700), the commitments in the International Conference on Population and Development and Beijing Platform for Action, the Declaration of Alma Ata, the 2009 Ministerial Declaration of the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, the First Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and Non-Communicable Diseases, the Beijing Declaration of the BRICS Health Ministers Meeting, the Nassau Declaration on Health, the Jakarta Declaration on Occupation Health for All, the Abuja Declaration and the Plan of Action from the African Summit on Roll Back Malaria, the 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition, the Outcome Document of Rio + 20, “The Future We Want”, and the Resolutions of the UN General Assembly on Global Health and Foreign Policy, among others:

**Reaffirm** that the physical and mental health of girls and women is a human right and at the heart of a people-centered, planetary approach to sustainable development;

**Reaffirm** that country leadership, including both governments and civil society, is vital for saving lives and improving health, and that universal health coverage and strengthening and reform of national healthcare systems are key for securing women’s physical and mental health and well-being, along with capacity building for the training of policy makers at all levels, from the local and national to the sub-regional, regional and the global;



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**Commend** the achievement of nearly halving global maternal mortality since 1990, and enhanced focus on Non-communicable Diseases, particularly those that impact women's health, including cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes, and mental disorders; and note in particular the achievements on women and children's health since the 2010 launch of the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health;

**Regret** that progress has been uneven in, between and within countries, often excluding poor, marginalized and underserved groups, including adolescents, girls and women with disabilities;

**Express** concern that progress to achieve significant increases in the levels of healthcare for both men and women has been slow;

**Recognize** the role of media, including communicating on public health and the design and application of new technologies, respecting gender differences;

**Recognize** that to solve the problems and improve the physical and mental health of girls and women, multi-sector actions and investments are necessary;

**Stress** that universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, including family planning, information and education, taking into consideration culture, beliefs and diversity, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes, is crucial to achieve gender equality and to end preventable maternal, newborn and adolescent morbidity and mortality and preventing still births;

**Recognize** that unforeseen challenges have emerged for women as caregivers in treatment of populations affected by, or susceptible to, highly contagious communicable diseases;

**Recognize** that mental disorders, as a group, are the leading causes of disability globally and are universal across all countries, and that mental disorders also commonly occur with infectious diseases, including HIV, and non-communicable diseases, thus leading to poorer outcomes and greater risk of death;

**Recognize** that depression is the leading cause of disability for women, particularly related to their



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social and economic inequality, and that mental depression can increase risk for preterm births and low birth-weight infants;

**Recognize** that suicide is the leading cause of death for adolescent girls;

**Recognize** that in successfully achieving implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (“MDGs”), the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”), or any health-related targets, mental disorders must be treated;

**Recognize** that the extreme burdens on economic, social and cultural institutions created by epidemics, pandemics, natural hazards and man-made disasters call for additional resources to support recovery efforts in the affected communities, especially women and girls who are more vulnerable during these disasters;

**Emphasize** the role of health ministries in developing means of communication with their counterparts and with the general public in disseminating information that will help to lessen fear and misconceived ideas about the nature of the response to the new and emerging communicable diseases;

**Commit** to strengthening, enhancing and establishing partnerships among governments at all levels, including parliamentarians and local authorities, academia, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders;

**View** with concern the impact on all regions from the toll on populations from non-communicable diseases and unhealthy lifestyles;

**Welcome** the major contributions and preminent leadership of the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in their central role in mobilizing Member States, the UN system, civil society, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders at all levels in support of promotion of women’s health and gender equality;



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**Resolve** to bring to the attention of Member States the issues addressed at this conference that will impact the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDG negotiations, and to ensure that the implementation of the MDGs continue to be achieved at country level;

**Ensure** the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and well-being;

**Achieve** effective universal healthcare coverage to ensure that all people have the right to services and care that they need, without discrimination or financial hardship.

## CALL TO ACTION

We, participants in the Inaugural World Women's Health and Development Forum, call upon all stakeholders, including Member States, the UN system, civil society, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders to:

**Prioritize** the physical and mental health and human rights of girls, adolescents and women in the indicators of the SDGs;

**Include**, at a minimum, a standalone health goal to uphold physical and mental health as a human right and to maximize equitable access to physical and mental health and well-being;

**Include** strong global targets for 2030 to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity;

**Reduce** premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, particularly those that impact women's health including cervical cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and diabetes, and mental disorders;

**Ensure** universal access for effective healthcare services for women and girls through, among others, creation of free-of-charge health clinics;

**Ensure** that information on healthcare is understandable, accurate and accessible to all, including women with disabilities;



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**Engage** women and girls through mentoring and provision of opportunities to participate in interactive learning;

**Strengthen** efforts and provision of resources to improve prevention and promotion of physical and mental health for women and girls, including public health campaigns that raise awareness and provide education;

**Ensure** provision of adequate resources for translational and clinical research to develop innovative medical devices and novel strategies to prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases of girls and women and promote physical and mental health and well-being;

**Commit** to differentiated targets and indicators to guarantee focus on key populations including young girls and older women, marginalized and underserved groups, and to take into account different levels of development in countries;

**Establish** shared goals with health-enhancing sectors, such as education, nutrition, water and sanitation, and provision of consistent and reliable rural electrification, roads, skills and employment;

**Develop** capacity for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector partnerships in order to maximize health outcomes and the contribution that better health makes to other sectors;

**Strengthen** capacity-building of civil society by engaging women in policy-making and implementation, respecting cultural diversity;

**Ensure** the engagement of young people and other key populations, particularly in holding stakeholders to account;

**Develop** civil registration and vital statistics systems, with a special emphasis on girls and women, and strengthen national health information systems and National Statistical Offices and statistical systems to collect and publish key health data, including data on marginalized and underserved groups;

**Call** on Ministries of Health to establish Offices of Women's Health with the mission of protecting



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and advancing the health of women and girls broadly;

**Support** women's involvement and good governance and leadership at all levels of government, civil society, the private sector, academia and the global community, strengthened by the use of timely, reliable data and evidence for transparency in decision-making and accountability;

**Aim** to achieve the Abuja Declaration's commitment by Heads of State of African Union countries who met in 2001 and pledged to set a target of allocating at least 15% of their annual budget to improve the health sector;

**Establish** a World Women's Health and Sustainable Development Institute as part of a renewed Global Partnership for Development;

**Seek** to establish the World Women's Health and Development Forum secretariat appropriately within the United Nations;

**Recognize** the achievements of women in science by establishing annually on 11 February an International Day for Women in Science;

**Reaffirm** the role of information and communication technologies for women's empowerment and recognize the need to foster participation of women and girls in the ICT domain, as a nation's competitiveness depends significantly on whether and how it educates and utilizes the skills of women and girls;

**Include** mechanisms for the financing of healthcare delivery by national healthcare systems and seek to find ways in which legislation and policy can ensure the right of healthcare for all;

**Create** training courses in women's health for parliamentarians and government officials in cooperation with partners that might include, among others, the International Parliamentary Union, the UN Public Administration Network (UNPAN), UN University (UNU), the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT);

**Take** advantage of and leverage the impact of social media and public health campaigns to raise



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awareness and provide education about good nutrition habits at the individual, family and community levels through pursuit of options for healthy lifestyles and leisure time and the provision of local food that is grown sustainably through practices such as, but not limited to, hydroponic and organic agriculture;

**Ensure** the inclusion of sex and gender factors in all biomedical research and development policies particularly in pharmaceutical industries;

**Ensure** that pharmaceutical manufacturers price drugs affordably for affected populations and that manufacturers of medications and vitamins take into account the physical differences between men and women;

**Recognize** that there is an urgent need for science policy to help shape important aspects of biomedical research, the pharmaceutical, biological and medical devices industries, and to advance women's health;

**Develop** effective prevention and promotion programmes to address women's mental health and well-being, provide training and education to enhance the competence of primary health care providers to recognize and treat mental disorders;

**Increase** professional capacity and promote evidenced based interventions that are culturally and gender appropriate;

**Increase** funding and resources to build local capacity and community-based services;

**Promote** in all countries the development of national health and mental health policies that include women's health;

**Ensure** that young girls and women migrants, displaced persons and refugees who are considered a vulnerable population during times of conflict and disasters are provided with physical and mental health treatment as part of the refugee services that they receive;

**Ensure** that gender based violence, human trafficking, early marriages and any form of violence to which girls and women are subjected will be eradicated universally through education of the population,



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adoption of laws by governments to protect women, and through the empowerment of women in recognizing their rights and their value, and ensure that women and girls have access to the necessary services that will help them break the cycle of violence;

**Call** on the entertainment industry to end stereotypical images that portray violence against women as tolerable and that promote specific beauty standards that negatively affect girls and women's mental and physical health and well-being;

**Communicate** to National Sustainable Development Commissions the work of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT) through this Forum and encourage such Commissions to recognize the Forum as an advisory body on women's physical and mental health and sustainable development;

**Recognize** women as equal citizens with rights and responsibilities universally, and implement laws and regulations towards that aim.

*Approved by Acclamation on Thursday 12th day of February 2015*

*United Nations Headquarters*