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**2010 EMERGES AS HISTORIC YEAR OF DECISIVE ACTION TO SAVE THE LIVES
OF MORE THAN 10 MILLION WOMEN AND CHILDREN BY 2015**

***Improving maternal and child health ‘one of the best investments we can make’ declares UN
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at Women Deliver Conference***

Washington, DC, 7 June – Global momentum is growing in the fight to save the lives of 10 million women and children every year by 2015, in an effort spearheaded by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Leaders of the G8, the G20 and governments from every region of the world, as well as leaders from the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropy and UN entities, are building support for a Joint Action Plan led by the Secretary-General to accelerate progress to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ensure that investments made in women’s and children’s health are well spent. A new accountability framework will ensure partners make and track commitments in finance, service delivery and policy development.

“When we work together, we succeed,” said the United Nations Secretary-General in his opening address today at the Women Deliver 2010 Conference in Washington, DC, which brings together 3,000 participants from 140 countries and is the largest ever conference on maternal health. “History will show that 2010 was a year of new, decisive action – a year when the world decided that no woman should die giving life and no child should die when we know how to save them.”

“We truly are at a tipping point,” says Jill Sheffield, President of Women Deliver. “The first Women Deliver conference in 2007 started a movement, and we now see a convergence of elements and interests. This interest has to be turned into action. The time is right. The good news is, that in a world of difficult problems, here is a major challenge we can meet.”

The Secretary-General is seeking new commitments from all sectors against the needs identified in the Joint Action Plan. These new commitments will be made in the run up and at the UN MDG Summit in New York in September 2010.

Lives of Mothers and Children Inextricably Linked to Millennium Development Goals

Opening the plenary of the conference, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, “Improvements for women, children and girls create a positive ripple effect accelerating progress in all of our development goals.”

Combating AIDS, TB and malaria was singled out as a key part of improving survival rates for vulnerable women and children.

Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Key to Building Peaceful and Productive Societies

"It pays to invest in women's reproductive health and rights. It's not only the right thing to do; it is also smart economics. Women deliver enormous social and economic benefits for their families, communities and nations," said Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

- Maternal and newborn mortality alone causes global productivity losses of US\$15 billion annually.¹ Investing in children's health creates the foundation for a more productive future workforce.
- Vaccination in poor countries means children grow up healthier, do better at school and are therefore more productive as adults. The impact of vaccination is potentially as large as or larger than the returns on basic education.²

"If women are denied a chance to develop their full human potential, is society as a whole really healthy? What does this say about the state of social progress in the 21st century? It's time to pay girls and women back, to make sure that they get the care and support they need," said Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization.

Solutions that Work

"The solutions that save the lives of women and children are well-known and cost-effective," said Flavia Bustreo, MD, Director, The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, an alliance of more than 300 members that is facilitating the development of the Joint Action Plan.

Successful approaches that can be implemented globally include:

- Providing access to both family planning and maternal and newborn care to all women in need, in developing countries, costs \$4.50 per capita per year³, and can save 70 per cent of women's lives and 44 per cent of newborn lives currently lost⁴.
- Simple prevention and treatment for pneumonia, diarrhea, and malaria such as antibiotics and bed nets could save the lives of up to three million infants and children.
- Increased coverage of three vaccines – pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), rotavirus vaccine (Rota), and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) vaccine – will prevent one and a half million deaths in children under five years.

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¹ USAID, 2001. USAID Congressional Budget Justification FY2002: program, performance and prospects – the global health pillar. United States Agency for International Development: Washington, DC.

² Bloom, D.E., Canning, D., Weston, W., The Valuation of Vaccination, *World Economics*, 2005, Vol. 6, pp. 15-39.

³ Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, *Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health*, Guttmacher Institute, New York, December 2009, p. 28.

⁴ Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, *Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health*, Guttmacher Institute, New York, December 2009, p. 5.