

## UN Commission sets out plan to make life-saving health supplies more accessible

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**UNITED NATIONS, New York, 26 September 2012** – A new [plan and set of recommendations](#) to improve the supply and access of life-saving health supplies was submitted today to the UN Secretary-General by the members of the *United Nations Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children*.

The Commission is part of the *Every Woman Every Child* movement and was formed to support the UN Secretary-General's *Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health*, with the aim of ending the suffering of women and children around the world caused by lack of access to life-saving commodities. The Secretary-General called on the global community to work together to save 16 million lives by 2015. The Commission seeks to meet this challenge by improving access and use of essential medicines, medical devices and health supplies that effectively address causes of death during pregnancy, childbirth and into childhood.

President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, who co-chair the Commission, expressed their continued commitment to improving access to these supplies. Other commissioners, as well as UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake and UNFPA Executive Director Babatunde Osotimehin, who serve as Commission vice-chairs, echoed the call to action.

"I am pleased to see the Commission's work presented here today and am committed to seeing these important recommendations implemented at country level, where they will impact millions of lives," said President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria. "As co-chair of this important Commission, I will be hosting a meeting in Abuja later this year to discuss with ministers from other countries how we will rapidly translate this work into tangible action for women and children."

"In spite of promising decline in maternal and child mortality with around 40 percent since 1990, the fact that the day a woman gives birth is still the most dangerous day in her and her child's life is unacceptable," said Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway. "The Commission's recommendations are concrete and represent highly cost effective interventions."

The recommended steps include bulk buying, local manufacturing and innovative marketing to help transform the supply, demand and use of quality life-saving products. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of women and children's lives could be saved each year with essential supplies, including for family planning. Medicines for the prevention of bleeding after childbirth and treatment of diarrhoea and pneumonia such as oral rehydration solution and zinc and amoxicillin – which cost less than 50 cents per treatment -- can make the difference between life and death for mothers and their babies.

"It is simply wrong that millions of children and women still die every year when we have the products and the knowledge to save their lives," said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. "With the Commission's help, we have still more practical solutions. What is needed now is the political will to implement them."

As a result of better planning, increased financial resources, bulk buying, and joint procurement, the availability of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets (LLINs) in sub-Saharan Africa has shot up from 5.6 million in 2004 to 145 million in 2010 and contributed to a substantial reduction in malarial deaths on the continent.

“We are committed to increasing support to the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission, especially regarding maternal health and family planning,” said UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin. “Access to voluntary family planning saves lives. We have to make sure that all women and girls have access to the reproductive health services and supplies they want and need. This is not only a matter of human rights, but also a matter of life and death. Moreover, healthier women and girls have more chances of fulfilling their potential and becoming more productive citizens.”

The Commission examined [13 medicines and health supplies](#), focusing on 50 countries with high death rates among women, newborns, and children under five due to preventable causes.

During the event, President Bill Clinton, founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation and 42<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States, delivered remarks in support of the commission’s work.

### **Commissioners**

1. Sir Andrew Witty, Chief Executive Officer, GlaxoSmithKline
2. Agnès Saint-Raymond, Head of Human Medicines Special Areas, European Medicines Agency
3. Bob Collymore, Chief Executive Officer, Safaricom
4. Christopher Elias, President for Global Development, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
5. Dan Brutto, President, UPS International
6. Gary Cohen, Executive Vice President, BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company)
7. Hassan Mshinda, Director General Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology
8. Heather Bresch, CEO , MylanInc
9. Jamie Cooper-Hohn, President and CEO, Children's Investment Fund Foundation
10. Jasmine Whitbread, Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children International
11. Julio Frenk, Chair, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
12. Kenneth C. Frazier, President and CEO, Merck
13. Rajiv Shah, Administrator, United States Agency for International Development

14. Ray Chambers, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Malaria
15. Li Dongjiu (Robert Lee), President, Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Development Co., Ltd.
16. M.K. Bhan, Secretary to the Government of India Department of Biotechnology
17. Michael Anderson, Director-General for Policy and Global Programmes, UK Department for International Development
18. Per Heggnes, CEO, IKEA Foundation
19. TeguestGuerma, Director General, AMREF
20. ZainabHawaBangura, UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict

#### **About the UN Commission on Life-saving Commodities for Women and Children**

The Commission was created by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, under the auspices of the Every Woman Every Child initiative. The Commission aims to increase access to [life-saving medicines and health supplies](#) for the world's most vulnerable people. The Commission is co-chaired by President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway and UNICEF and UNFPA serve as vice-chairs. [www.everywomaneverychild.org/resources/un-commission-on-life-saving-commodities](http://www.everywomaneverychild.org/resources/un-commission-on-life-saving-commodities)

#### **About Every Woman Every Child**

Every Woman Every Child is an unprecedented global movement, spearheaded by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to mobilize and intensify global action to improve the health of women and children around the world. In the two years since its launch, the Every Woman Every Child movement has seen remarkable progress, bringing new attention and investment to some of the most neglected causes of women's and children's mortality, including preterm birth and contraceptive access most recently. A number of key advocacy moments and events served as catalysts for change in 2012 in support of Every Woman Every Child: April saw the launch of the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children, which aims to increase access to life-saving medicines and health supplies for the world's most vulnerable women and children; 30 new and expanded commitments proposing actions towards the prevention and care of preterm birth were announced in May around the launch of the Born Too Soon report on preterm birth; in June, over 80 governments and a multitude of partners gathered at the Child Survival Call to Action to launch a sustained, global effort to save children's lives; and at the London Family Planning Summit in July more than 150 partners announced commitments to ensure that an additional 120 million women and girls can access voluntary family planning by 2020. Further detailing the movement's progress and implementation of commitments, the first annual review of the independent Expert Review Group will be presented to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the week of the 2012 United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York. This report will reinforce the movement's remarkable progress, while also emphasizing that momentum needs to be sustained. This remarkable progress needs to be sustained to achieve the health MDGs and reach our global target to prevent the deaths of 16 million women and children, and improve the lives of millions more by 2015.

#### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood

through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

#### **About UNFPA**

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that delivers a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA works in partnership with more than 150 countries, especially in the area of reproductive health, including maternal health and family planning. For more than 30 years, UNFPA has been procuring contraceptives and life-saving commodities and medicines for developing countries and is today one of the largest public sector procurers of these items.

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