



Joint message of Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, and Agneta S. Bridges, Secretary General, ICM, International Confederation of Midwives

International Day of the Midwife, 5 May 2010

“The World Needs Midwives Now More than Ever”

Each year hundreds of thousands of women die and three million newborns do not survive the first week of life because they lack access to maternity health services and skilled midwifery care. For every tragic maternal death another 20 women face serious or long-lasting illness or disabilities such as obstetric fistula.

On the International Day of the Midwife, the International Confederation of Midwives and UNFPA are calling on the governments of the world to urgently address the shortage of 350,000 midwives worldwide. UNFPA’s Thoraya Obaid said, *“No woman should die trying to give life. Increased investment is needed to provide midwifery skills and life saving services and to make midwives a priority within health programmes, policies and budgets”*.

The ICM’s Agneta Bridges said, *“Skilled midwives are urgently needed in many communities that are hard-to-reach, have insufficient midwives or are affected by conflict”*.

The UNFPA and ICM point out that midwives can prevent up to 90 per cent of maternal deaths where they are authorized to practice their competencies and play a full role during pregnancy, childbirth and after birth. They have a critical role in providing family planning, counseling, and preventing HIV transmission from mother to child.

As the world gears up for the 10-year review of the Millennium Development Goals, both organisations will be campaigning to increase funding for goals 4, 5 and 6 to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV and AIDS.

We look forward to the high-level Midwifery Symposium from 5-6 June in Washington D.C., immediately preceding the Women Deliver Conference. The symposium aims to raise awareness around the core role of midwifery services in achieving MDGs 4, 5 and 6; address challenges in global standards on education and regulation of midwives; and strengthen midwifery services.

On the International Day of the Midwife, the ICM and UNFPA confirm our commitment to work together to improve the education, regulation, status and working conditions of midwives in communities. We do so in celebration of quality midwifery worldwide and in recognition that **the world needs midwives now more than ever** to protect the lives of women and babies.