

**UNITED STATES NATIONAL STATEMENT  
AT THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON THE ICPD BEYOND 2014  
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2014**

**DELIVERED BY:**

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE  
BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION  
ANNE C. RICHARD**

Mr. President, it is an honor to speak on behalf of the United States – and to join other member states, UN agencies and civil society in renewing our full support for the ICPD Program of Action – first adopted nearly 20 years ago to this day. Let me begin by commending the work that led up to this special session and has informed our discussions. I want to thank UNFPA, the ICPD Beyond 2014 Secretariat, and the UN Population Division for their many contributions.

The 1994 Cairo conference changed the global discussion, illuminating what becomes more resoundingly clear with each passing year – that human rights, gender equity, global health, and development must go hand in hand. The Cairo goals remain the foundation of our work to promote reproductive health and rights and the empowerment of women and young people. As U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry pointed out, “societies where women and girls are safe, where women are empowered to exercise their rights and move their communities forward, these societies are more prosperous and more stable – not occasionally but always.”

We have made impressive strides, especially in education and reducing maternal and child mortality. But progress has been uneven and has left many behind.

According to the operational review and the index report prepared for our discussions on the ICPD beyond 2014, many countries agree that these gaps require urgent attention.

To make reproductive health and respect for reproductive rights a reality for all, we must get health services to those who still lack them, including many women, young people, and those caught in conflicts and crises.

We must also stand up for every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and for their ability to make their own choices about sexuality and reproduction, and to make these choices free from coercion, discrimination, and violence.

We must do more to empower young people. Over 40 percent of the world's population is under the age of 25. The choices they make will have profound consequences, for themselves and the world.

Many must navigate in treacherous waters. More than two million adolescents live with HIV. Three million girls each year are subjected to genital mutilation or cutting, and many will suffer life-long health consequences.

And despite near-universal commitment to eliminate early and forced marriage, one in three girls in developing countries will be married before she is 18. More than 15 million girls will give birth each year. These early pregnancies can kill, cause life-long disabilities, cut off opportunities and extinguish hope. Many young mothers never finish school. Their chance to learn and earn enough to lift their families and communities out of poverty may be lost forever.

We must take more concrete and decisive steps to reach our goal of full gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. We must end the scourge of gender-based violence both in peacetime and in wartime. We must end impunity for perpetrators, provide services to survivors, and prevent – and not just punish – these human rights abuses.

Integrating sexual and reproductive health services is also a priority. Providing maternal health care, contraception and treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted illnesses together is not just a matter of convenience. It is a matter of life and death. We know that providing family planning to all who want it could prevent nearly one-third of the estimated 300,000 maternal deaths that occur every year.

And finally, we must keep the eyes of the world focused on achieving the ICPD goals beyond 2014. The two decades since Cairo have confirmed that governments chose the right path, and we must continue to push forward. The Post-2015 Development Agenda offers an opportunity for the global community to come together around a new set of development goals for the next fifteen years – and the United States stands behind this.

We fully support a dedicated goal to promote gender equality and empower women and girls, recognizing this could be one of the most transformative goals we could set in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This special session is an opportunity for everyone to reaffirm support for the ICPD agenda, and to ensure we address these issues in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We must seize this chance and the United States is committed to doing our part.

Thank you.