

**Remarks by Ms. Ugochi Daniels, Representative a.i., UNFPA
for the Inaugural Ceremony of World Population Day 2008
11 July 2008, City Hall**

1. Honourable Ms. Sashi Shrestha, State Minister for Ministry of Health and Population
 2. Mr. Jnawali, Joint Secretary, Population Division, Ministry of Health and Population
 3. Dr. Ojha, director General, Department of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Population
 4. Dr. Ram Sharan Pathak, Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University
- Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since 1990, World Population Day has been celebrated by countries around the world in recognition of the important links between population issues and the well-being of people and the environment.

The theme for this year's World Population Day is "Family Planning: it's a right, let's make it real".

What does the slogan "Family Planning: it's a right, let's make it real" mean?

It highlights the basic human right for individuals and couples to decide the timing and the spacing of their children.

In 1994, at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) all countries were called upon to take steps to meet the family planning needs of their peoples. A joint commitment was made to provide universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family planning methods by 2015. Nepal has also made this important commitment to support the well-being of its people.

Unfortunately, hundreds of millions of women, men and young people do not have access to contraceptives to be able to exercise this reproductive health right. Today,

200 million women worldwide want to delay or avoid pregnancy, but are not using safe and effective family planning. In Nepal, it is estimated that one in five women, for different reasons, is prevented from using contraceptives despite being aware of family planning methods and despite her wish to use them.

Family planning is essential to fighting poverty. Yet, the world is failing to meet the needs of the poorest. Investing in family planning is one of the most cost-effective ways for poor countries to make progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Through family planning, we address many different development goals. Women and couples making their own choices about family planning addresses gender equality. Access to contraceptives empowers women. It can also save their life. The use of condoms prevents the spread of HIV and AIDS reducing the burden of HIV and AIDS on families and communities. Through family planning we can also improve newborn and child health.

When parents decide the number and spacing of their children they are better prepared to take care of them. With access to family planning, parents can plan ahead and devote more of their resources to the education and health of each child. This can reduce poverty and hunger for all members of a household, and benefit families, communities and nations.

Young people are particularly vulnerable and in need of services. In Nepal, about 24% of the population are adolescents. Every year, millions of young people become sexually active. However, many have no access to counseling, information and contraceptives. Maternal morbidity and mortality of adolescent mothers is higher than of any other age group.

Access to family planning can increase young people's opportunities throughout their lives. Girls can stay in school longer, have fewer and healthier pregnancies, and have better employment opportunities.

What is needed to make the right to family planning a reality?

In order for women and couples to be able to decide the number and spacing of their children, they need to have the necessary information and means to do so.

There is a need to increase awareness on different methods of family planning, as well as on the benefits of family planning to the health of individuals, families and communities.

There is also a need to make available a full range of safe and effective methods of family planning. The availability of services should be designed in a manner that ensures quality care, and particularly a client-friendly approach. Ensuring youth-friendly services is an example of the need to target a specific group taking into account their special needs. The Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia (RHIYA) implemented in Nepal was a successful approach to engage young people, which the Government and partners should continue to build on.

UNFPA has a long history of working in Nepal, where it may be best known for their family planning services. UNFPA is committed to the joint efforts needed to ensure universal access to reproductive health and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

Partnerships with the government, civil society and other external development partners, including UN agencies, is essential to forecasting needs, providing and coordinating the distribution of reproductive health commodities, mobilizing support and ensuring the availability of information and access to family planning for every woman and man. Today we need to renew our commitment to improving the health of every girl, boy, woman and man. Today action is needed to bring family planning back to the top of the development agenda and to ensure adequate resources for delivering on our commitments. I count on all of you gathered here on World population Day to play your role to ensure that every woman has access to family planning services she needs.

Thank you.