

Dear Members of the Executive Committee of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition,

Every year, thousands of women die in childbirth and from pregnancy-related causes. While excellent progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality rates in some countries, more remains to be done to achieve the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Reproductive health supplies, including family planning, are essential to achieving these Goals. However, more than 215 million women in the developing world who wish to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy are not using modern contraception. With the announcement of the Secretary General's *Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health*, we see unprecedented momentum in the global development community to improve women's health.

Every year, the Netherlands contributes 0.8% of its GNP to poverty reduction. This makes it one of the few countries that meet the internationally agreed norm for development aid. The Netherlands supports initiatives in 36 partner countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been an active member of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition since its inception. Between 2006 and 2008, our representative on the Coalition's Executive Board, Ms. Margret Verwijk, served as co-Chair of the Coalition, successfully overseeing a period of rapid growth and systems building. We applaud the **HANDtoHAND** Campaign to galvanize this community's contribution to the Secretary General's *Global Strategy* and the Coalition's ambitious new goal of achieving 100 million new users of contraception in low-income countries by 2015. Success at meeting this challenge will address the family planning needs of 80% of women in these countries, and reduce by 110,000 the number of women who die giving birth.

The Netherlands continues to emphasize and prioritise prevention and the protection and fulfillment of human rights - both closely linked to the promotion and improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the fight against HIV. In order to make any progress the broadest possible package of sexual and reproductive health services must be available and accessible to all, including family planning, comprehensive sexuality education – also for adolescents - and safe abortion services. Adolescents and young people are a key group. Investing in this group - virtually half of the world's population - means investing in our future.

The Netherlands emphasizes the importance of target MDG 5B in order to be able to attain MDG 5 and all other MDGs. The Addis Call to Urgent Action for Maternal Health (Addis Abeba, October 2009) summarises the urgent call for increased investments in family planning, adolescents and health systems strengthening, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Netherlands has always acknowledged the importance of RH supplies. Since 2007 the Netherlands has been supporting the Global Programme for Reproductive Health Commodity Security with a contribution of € 30 million per year over the period of 2008 through 2011.

We look forward to working with our Coalition partners – in whatever way - in bringing family planning to 100 million new users by 2015.

Sincerely,

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands