

**STATE OF THE COALITION**  
**Presentation to the Twelfth Membership Meeting of the**  
**Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, Addis Ababa**  
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John P. Skibiak  
Director, Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

Friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure and indeed pride to welcome you here this morning to the Twelfth Membership Meeting of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. It is, I will admit, a bit odd to be giving this address three days into a meeting – but it is nonetheless, a great honor to be here in Ethiopia. And it is an honor to be here in the company of representatives from 56 different countries. This week has certainly been largest gathering ever held by the Coalition, and quite possibly the largest ever on the subject of RHCS.

I think we would all agree that today's meeting brings to a close a tremendous week. But it also brings to a close an even more spectacular year. In fact, as I was preparing this annual State of the Coalition, my greatest challenge was *not* figuring what *to* include – but rather deciding what to cut.

Standing as we are, one decade after Istanbul, the last twelve months have been, understandably, a period of serious reflection – reflection as to who we are, what have we achieved and how the lessons of that achievement can be applied to resolving the very real challenges we face in the decade to come.

But it has also been a year of dramatic achievement where we have partners, working under the umbrella of the Coalition, delivering concrete, measurable results. They have added to the resource base for supplies, lowered prices, saved millions of dollars, and delivered products faster and more reliably than ever before.

And finally this year, we ventured forth on a range of new ambitious endeavors – endeavors that reflect our growing maturity and strength in numbers, and yes the opportunities inherent in a more favorable environment for supplies. This year we shed our training wheels and began playing with the big kids.

So this morning, I would these three themes of past, present and future to help make sense of this truly dramatic year.

Let me begin with the events of this week. Many in the last few days have asked me why Addis Ababa? why the Call to Action? why Access for All? The answer, quite simply, rests with many of the people in this room today: it is the result of deliberations, consultations, and hard work carried out by individuals from across the Coalition.

In the wake of last year's membership meeting, I convened a Task Force to give shape to what we were then calling Istanbul+10. That Task Force, chaired by my colleague Bonnie Keith, brought together members of the working groups, the Executive Committee, and other interested parties to figure out how, during the course of 2011, we could do justice to the legacy of Istanbul – be it in terms of activities, meetings, or other initiatives. For many, the most visible legacy of their work will be the shape of this week's agendas or meetings. But for me, the true value of the Task Force's work comes from the fact that it has allowed so many of us, perhaps for the first time, to think carefully about who we are; how we got here; and what makes us truly unique.

As Julie Solo pointed out so clearly in her history of the supplies movement – which is itself an output of the Istanbul+10 initiative - our uniqueness comes from the ability to lead from behind; to set agendas and confront issues, not on the basis of institutional affiliation, but from a common sense of purpose. It is that principle that has enabled us – despite our dramatic growth - to provide a neutral space for discussion, to pool energies and to add value to the work of our members.

Throughout our relatively short history, the Coalition’s real movers have always been, and remain, its member institutions, more than a third of which are from the Global South. It is they who generate new knowledge, strengthen systems, lobby key decision makers, and/or sustain the needed resource base. And it is this ownership that has fueled what we call the global supply movement.

This year, the energy emanating from the Coalition truly was electric. Few activities capture better that electricity than the CARhs (Coordinated Assistance for RH Supplies) Group. The CARhs brings together the world’s key commodity suppliers to address the short-term supply crises that periodically befall countries. Through electronic data-sharing and decision-making, members identify existing or potential supply shortages or overstocks, assess their causes, develop solutions, and where possible, apply them.

Last year the CARhs addressed 184 separate supply crises, the highest number of cases since the group was established in 2005. In some cases, all that that was needed was better information. But all too often it was not. And in those cases, the CARhs was successful in averting actual stock-outs an impressive 65 percent of the time. In 2010, the CARh’s work drove the procurement of more than US\$8.7 million in RH commodities. And it saved us money. Earlier this year, the CARhs identified and arranged the transfer of more than \$2m worth of excess stock commodities, commodities that may very well have never been used and are now in the hands, or arms as the case may be, of those who truly need them.

These dramatic accomplishments are very much a testament to the power of partnerships, but they are also very much a testament to the effective *management* of such partnerships. As many of you are aware, for the past 3 years, the CARh has been managed by USAID, and in particular by Kevin Pilz with support from Kaitlyn Roche. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Coalition, to congratulate Kevin and Kaitlyn and indeed all those in the CARhs for a truly outstanding year. There are few areas in this field where attribution is so unambiguous – this time, there is no mistaking as to whom we have to credit for this success.

The last 12 months also saw dramatic progress on another, very different front. Ever since the infamous “donor gap” was unveiled a decade ago in Istanbul, money has been an important – some might even argue only measure of success. But as we all now know, closing the gap is not just about “more money”, it is also about “better money”. It is about having money when it is needed, and it is about making the most of money when it is tight. For the last five years - we as a Coalition have labored together to find effective solutions to this unfortunate ying and yang. This year, I am happy to say, we not only saw the birth of solutions to both, we saw each take its first steps.

The Pledge Guarantee for Health, for example, has shown us that delayed disbursements in donor funding are no excuse for delayed action. Late last year, the Zambian Government faced the start of its annual rainy season with dwindling stocks of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria, and few resources to replenish that stock. Funds committed by the World Bank were not due for release until April, meaning the new nets would most likely not be available until well after the peak rainy season.

Facing this impasse, the Government of Zambia and World Bank turned to the Pledge Guarantee for Health. Within a few short weeks, the Pledge Guarantee secured a \$4.8 million Letter of Credit for the Government of Zambia allowing them to immediately purchase bed nets and in so doing averted an estimated 100,000 cases of malaria and saving an estimated \$250,000 in treatment costs and lost productivity.

To be sure, impregnated bed nets are not what immediately comes to mind when we speak of RH supplies, but the success of this effort has demonstrated to us and the world that the tool can work. Yesterday, we even heard that PGH may play a key role in increasing access to implantable contraception through the advent of an innovative pricing arrangement. As partners in this endeavor, I ask you to join me in congratulating the UN Foundation as manager of the Pledge Guarantee, but also in spreading the word, far and wide, about the possibilities inherent in this new mechanism.

Complementing the Pledge Guarantee has been an equally innovative mechanism – a mechanism for solving one dilemma faced by nearly everyone: how to be treated as a big spender - rapid delivery, favorable pricing, and value for money - when the size of your wallet may be anything but big. Last year, we took a major step in that direction with the launch by UNFPA of AccessRH. Developed under the auspices of the Coalition, AccessRH promises to improve access to affordable, quality RH supplies, while at the same time reduce delivery times by providing stock held on its behalf by prequalified manufacturers.

This year, AccessRH proved that it could be done. In February, it built up stock levels that allowed it to fill orders of 53 mm condoms from Lebanon, Mongolia and Tanzania within roughly 11 weeks – slashing standard delivery times of newly manufactured condoms by nearly 77 percent. Already, 10 deliveries are in transit and plans are underway to purchase an additional \$1.5M of condoms by the end of the year. Like PGH, AccessRH is the culmination of a long struggle to break the cycle of boom and bust that still plagues our field. I congratulate UNFPA Copenhagen for its terrific work. But I also call upon everyone in this room to learn more about these new tools so that we can all become champions and advocates for them.

When we last met in Kampala, I said that this year would be marked by a renewed effort to reach out to new partners, particularly in the Global South. And we have done that. Of the 25 members to join since June of last year, 11 have come from developing countries. But few initiatives, in my view, exemplify the practical impact of that effort better than the Latin American Forum.

Last year at this time, the LAC Forum was barely more than idea in the making. Today, 12 months on the Forum includes 13 institutional members – hardly less than the Coalition itself had when I took this post in 2006. It has its own Steering committee, its own newsletter, and its own listserve of more than 130 individuals. Last summer, Forum members played a critical role in securing the nomination – and ultimately endorsement - of a Latin American candidate to the Coalition’s Executive Board. And this year, the Forum partnered with the SSWG to receive its first Innovation Fund grant – the recipient of which, PRISMA, is with us here today. And to top off these accomplishments, Forum members will hold their first annual membership meeting next month in Panama.

The success of the LAC Forum is, without a doubt, the result of tremendous work on the part of all its members – many of whom are in this room today. And to that group, I say “felicidades”! But there is one individual whose work I have seen first hand, someone to whom much of that success can be

attributed – and that individual is my colleague in the Secretariat, Gloria Castany. To her, on behalf of the Coalition and the Forum, I congratulate her and thank her for her dedication.

And I am especially pleased that the seeds for a new regional forum were planted just this week, here in Addis. On Monday, representatives from across Francophone Africa assembled to begin the process of building upon new regional commitments, agreed upon in Ouagadougou, to increase funding for RH commodities. In keeping with the spirit of “leading from behind”, efforts are now underway to garner the support of a partners a from across the region so that what emerges is not just a technical initiative, but a new supplies movement that promises to foster change in an area that has, for so long, evidenced the lowest RH indicators in SubSaharan Africa.

Last year in my State of the Coalition address, I remarked that “we stand here today on the threshold of a new chapter in the evolution of the Coalition”. Little could I have imagined at that time, what the next few weeks, let alone new chapter, had in store.

Following the announcement at Women Deliver of the UN Secretary General’s Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, the Coalition’s Executive Committee called upon the Secretariat to help rally the support of the family planning community behind the new initiative. Working together with a wide array of partners—from advocates, to demographers, to communications specialists, the Coalition launched its HANDtoHAND Campaign, which aims to reduce the unmet need for family planning by 100 million additional users by 2015.

Since the launch of HANDtoHAND, the campaign’s success has grown by leaps and bounds. And at the MDG Summit, held in September in New York, the 100 million metric was adopted as the cornsestone of the new five-year public-private global alliance on Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health among USAID, DFID, AusAID, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The HANDtoHAND Campaign has been recognized by the SG’s office as a critical component in its Global Strategy. And to date we have secured over 24 pledges of financial, program and policy support from across the public and private sectors.

HANDtoHAND has indeed opened a new chapter for the Coalition. But it is, as many have argued, with growth comes responsibilities. And as one of the largest network of RH organizations in the world, the Coalition has shown, through HAND to HAND, its willingness to do its part.

Over the last year we did more than start a campaign. We started new conversations. We brought the private and public sector together in a way that forged innovative thinking about how to address access for all through dialogue over reductions in the price of contraceptives. Yesterday’s announcement by Merck is, once again, a testament to the power of partnership. But it is also a clear demonstration of what can be achieved by the perseverance of dedicated partners around the world working under the umbrella of the Coalition. The neutral space we provided for these often sensitive discussions showed how otherwise confrontational issues can be resolved when there is trust; and when we recognize that at the end of the day, we are all working for the same goal, which is to improve the lives of women and men across the world.

Though the exact pricing levels cannot be released – for reasons those in the tendering and procurement know so well - what I can say is that these reductions will, between now and 2015, avert a quarter million more pregnancies, 317 more maternal deaths, and 155,000 more abortions. And if we all

work together to maximize this new opportunity through increased access and even lower prices, we have within our means the potential to almost double - from 8 to 14.5 million - the number of women currently accessing Implanon. Let us all work together – procurers, advocates, donors and manufacturers – to make that possible.

These discussions have also generated valuable lessons that we hope can be replicated with other products and other manufacturers. As one of my colleagues on the Executive Board mentioned to me on Monday, “this is exactly what the Coalition was created to do”. From now on, there is no turning back.

Last year in Kampala, I closed my State of the Coalition speech by suggesting that the coming year would represent for us a new chapter in our efforts to ensure commodity. That was an understatement if I ever heard one! And if last year is any indication of the future, then I can only say this coming year promises to be nothing short of the start of a new book!

We will, of course, carry on with those activities that have proven so successful in the past. We will, for example, continue efforts to pursue replenishment of the Innovation Fund which, after 2.5 years, is nearing exhaustion. This year, we completed an internal evaluation of the fund, highlighting both its strengths and areas for improvement. It is our hope that in the coming year, we will apply the lessons of that evaluation to seek out new resources – and to make it even more relevant and responsive to the needs of the Coalition’s rapidly expanding and diverse member base.

We will continue efforts to support the establishment and consolidation of thematic and cross-cutting initiatives such as the LAC Forum and newly proposed Francophone Forum. But I am especially excited at the prospect, identified during *Access for All*, of establishing a new Maternal Health Forum or caucus. For years, we have discussed this issue. And with the best of intentions, we have claimed it as one of our key priorities. But the reality is that, despite the tremendous work of individual members, as a Coalition we have not moved far. This time, however, I am optimistic that the coming year will be different. And I can assure those who wish to take up the mantle of establishing this new group, that we in the Secretariat will support you in every way possible.

We will, I am certain, build on the knowledge we gained this year in our work with the manufacturing and commercial sector, with the principal aim of expanding access. The past year has clearly demonstrated the value that comes from providing a neutral space for donors, procurers and manufacturers to meet in a context of trust, respect and common understanding. It is my hope that the lessons of that experience can be applied next year with other products and with other partners.

Next year will also see us come to grips with the operationalization of the HANDtoHAND campaign. As I mentioned yesterday, we will only meet the goals of HANDtoHAND if we are strategic in our approach. And to do that, we will be reaching out to you – to the demographers, and the manufacturers, and the program and policy people, and last but not least, to advocates who can ensure that the possibilities and potential of HANDtoHAND are understood, both globally and at country level.

We will, of course, continue look for opportunities to engage with the broader health community, especially with partners in the Global South. Over the course of the last year, we in the Coalition opened dialogues over membership with a number of national governments – Bangladesh, Tanzania, China, Australia, Indonesia, and Zambia, to name a few. We are honored that in the case of Zambia these discussions bore fruit. But it has become increasingly clear that our ability to embrace new members – be it with countries or other health communities - will depend on the support we receive from partners

located within them. So I ask those of you who represent countries or institutions not yet members of the Coalition, please work with us in ensuring you do have a seat at our table.

But perhaps most importantly of all, our challenge for the coming year we will be to take on board yesterday's Call for Action. Though short, it is indeed a powerful document, one that encompasses the aspirations and vision of our community in the decade to come. There is, to be sure, much to be digested. And it is a document containing both long and short term goals. But timing is of the essence because at the end of the day, what is at stake is the health of women and men.

I would, therefore, like to close this presentation by thanking you for your tremendous work and support over the past year. It is my hope that our achievements, coupled with the energy and dynamism of today will continue to inspire us, help us to achieve our strategic goals and, ultimately, to help meet the RH needs of women and men worldwide.

On that note, and on behalf of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, I wish you the best of success for a productive and exciting meeting