

Hon Minister of Health for Ethiopia, Government Representatives, Parliamentarians, RHSC Members, friends and colleagues.

The RHSC secretariat have been very clear about what they want me to say here this morning as Coalition Chair. My role is to set the context and the structure for the next two days. But those of you who know me, know that I never miss a good opportunity to talk about the things I care passionately about and to challenge people and be provocative. And I see no reason why an audience of people who care about the same things as I do should change that. But in the spirit of the power of partnership which I talk so often about I've asked many of you what you think I should say. I hope that in these next few minutes I both do my duty to the secretariat but also cover some of the key issues that are so important to all of us.

So in setting the context and structure for the next 2 days – I want to remind us why we are here and to explain how the meeting will unfold:

So why are we here? 2 reasons:

- Firstly – to reflect on what we have achieved as a community in the last 10 years,
- Secondly – to use this opportunity to identify what further we want to achieve and how we want to do it over the next decade.

These next 2 days provide us with an opportunity to assess progress and celebrate the success we have achieved since the global conference entitled “Meeting the Reproductive Health Challenge – achieving contraceptive security” was held in May 2001 – the meeting we affectionately call “the Istanbul meeting”.

Istanbul gave rise to the RH Supplies movement and it laid the groundwork for the RHSC as we know it today.

In reflecting on the Istanbul meeting we need to give recognition to our founding fathers (or in our case our founding mothers!) who transformed what many considered a technical issue into the global movement we have today. Many of those individuals are here in this room (although sadly some are not) and we honour and pay tribute to the leadership and vision they provided then and continue to provide today.

For those of you, who like me are relative newcomers to this agenda, I would encourage you to read the excellent report produced for the Coalition for this meeting by Julie Solo. You should all have a copy in your bags. It is not only informative in terms of understanding our history and where we have come from but it also a really good and inspiring read!

And that spirit of a global movement that began in Istanbul continues here in Addis. I think it is worth reminding ourselves that we are not here for a technical meeting. This is a conference that seeks to map out a future path and identify solutions for achieving RH Commodity Security in the next decade. For achieving Access for All. And this is something that everyone in this room can

contribute to. So I encourage you all to actively engage in the discussions and to contribute your thoughts and perspectives and to challenge and ask questions.

The two sessions today will also explore what country ownership means for achieving commodity security and what it means within the context of an increasingly globalized world. And that is why it is so important that we have so many representatives here from the Global South.

And I think it is worth briefly taking stock of who we have here today. People representing or working in over 40 different developing countries. People representing government, civil society and the private sector. People working on advocacy and on service delivery. People who manufacture, procure or fund RH supplies. People with expertise in logistics and supply chain management – people who develop policies and programmes. In short, some 350 people representing more than 200 different organizations. Each one of us with a different role to play. Each one of us with a comparative advantage in terms of our skills, knowledge and experience, in terms of our ways of working and the contribution we can make. But each one of us united by a common purpose!

And to me that's what makes the RHSC so special. Our ability to transcend our organisational and institutional identities, to step beyond our areas of interest and expertise and work to deliver shared outcomes.

To deliver a common commitment to ensure that women and men are able to choose, obtain and use the products they need to ensure their reproductive health. And we know that if we can achieve this we will transform the lives of women and men, their families and their communities today and for generations to come.

When I had the privilege of taking on the role of RHSC Chair at the annual membership meeting in London in June 2009, I talked about the “stars being aligned” about a real sense that we had a window of opportunity to achieve transformational outcomes. But even I didn't know then what those opportunities might be.

But another strength of the Coalition has been our ability to be both strategic and to be opportunistic. And a clear example of that has been the launch of the HandtoHand campaign last year. Under HandtoHand we set a very clear, and as some would say very ambitious, goal – to reduce the unmet need for family planning by 100m additional users by 2015. One of the most important things for me about HandtoHand is its alignment under the auspices of the UNSG's Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health and there are two reasons why I believe that:

- 1) Firstly because it potentially allows the issues we care about to benefit from the global movement that the UN Secretary General himself (and we should pause congratulate him in his reappointment yesterday in New York for a further five year term) for the movement he and others are generating around the Global Strategy – particularly in terms of the

priorities that developing country governments are articulating as they seek to achieve MDGs 4&5;

- 2) but secondly because it requires us to talk to people outside of our normal comfort zone, to people who have no knowledge or understanding of our issues even when we know that our issues make an important contribution to the things they care about;

So one of the things we need to do in the next couple of days is acknowledge the success we have achieved in bringing so many people to the table. But I also want us to think about what success will look like a decade from now, in 2021! Some of that might be relatively easy to articulate in terms of some of the outcomes we are seeking to achieve. But I also want to challenge us to think about how we go about achieving those outcomes. As I said earlier I think the RHSC is ideally placed and has a strong track record in providing the neutral space that brings people with a common interest together around a table.

But I think the challenge to all of us is to bring people to the table who don't know, or at least don't know yet, that they have a common interest. But these people have the potential to help deliver our priorities at the same time as we help them to achieve theirs.

We need to continue to expand our circle of interest and our circle of influence. I could go through the communities that are interested in each of the MDG goals and targets or any other development issues and highlight some of the links, but I will focus on just two to illustrate the point.

Lets take those working on MDG 6 and particularly HIV. We all talk about HIV/SRHR integration, but what are we actually doing about it? Where are the people in the room today who care about HIV and AIDS? Where were we two weeks ago when the global AIDS community met at the UN High Level Meeting on AIDS in New York? At that meeting those working on this issue gathered and re-committed to achieving Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care & Support by 2015. The set ambitious targets for getting people on HIV treatment and for preventing HIV infection.

As we know, the majority of HIV infections are sexually transmitted but it is not clear that the AIDS community have really thought about the role of RH supplies in preventing HIV infection. And in relation to the global commitment for the elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015, where are the conversations happening about the importance of RH supplies and family planning to the primary prevention of HIV including through PMTCT? Are we really listening to the needs of the HIV prevention community and offering our skills and knowledge to help them advance their issues and in doing so advance ours?

And ahead of the Global Fund Round 11 call in August, are we providing advice and guidance to those countries and teams completing proposals about how to ensure SRHR/HIV integration? Are we sharing the lessons from countries that have been successful in securing funding for RH supplies through the Global Fund?

And so for my second illustrative example, what about those working on MDG 7 – including environment and climate change? They usually acknowledge the contribution of rapid population growth to their issues but they go no further. They see the UN population projections as inevitable, as immovable, as a fixed variable, something that they need to simply plan around. They have no idea that the UN medium variant which projects a global population of 9.3 billion by 2050, reaching 10.1 billion by 2100, is based on the assumption that the family planning gap, the unmet need for family planning, is closed. They've not read the footnotes that say that small variations in fertility can produce major differences in the size of populations over the long term. They are completely unaware that the high projection variant, whose fertility is just half a child above that in the medium variant, produces a world population of 10.6 billion by 2050, and 15.8 billion by 2100.

But have we clearly articulated in their language the contribution that a rights-based approach to reproductive health and family planning can make to stabilising rapid population growth in the context of natural resource degradation and climate change. And I fully accept that there are all sorts of politics around “overconsumption” vs “overpopulation” and concerns about “population control” and “coercion” and broader issues around language tied up in this. But this is something that developing country governments are often much clearer about. A study of 40 National Adaption Programmes of Action (NAPA), showed that 37 cited rapid population growth as a factor that compounds other climate related concerns such as floods, droughts and decreased crop yields. And 6 countries (including Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda – all represented here today) identified rapid population growth as a main priority to be addressed by the NAPA strategy. So as the world reaches a population of 7 billion on October 31 this year and ahead of the Rio+20 Earth Summit next year are we reaching out to these people and showing them how we can help deliver their priorities in a rights-based way and in doing so contribute to a multitude of wider health and development outcomes? And are we saying we can do this often at much a lower cost and potentially in a much shorter timeframe than many of the strategies they are pursuing!

And on that point of cost. Over the next couple of days, we will talk about the global and country level funding needs for RH supplies – while the amounts should not be taken lightly, let's just think about them in the context of some of the other numbers we are all familiar with.

Look at GAVI which only a couple of weeks ago raised over \$4bn for vaccines, another highly cost effective intervention.

Look at the Global Fund which has successfully raised what \$16bn for the 3 diseases in the last decade. And then pause for a moment to reflect that the Global Fund was being established at the same time as we were meeting in Istanbul – look at what they have achieved in 10 years!

And then think about the global climate facility and their ambitions to raise \$100bn – our needs and numbers are rounding error in the context of this.

And yet as we know achieving Access for All to RH supplies can make a massive contribution to all these other development efforts and has been identified as one of the most cost-effective interventions and best-buys in development. So how are we articulating that to the broader development community? How are we bringing to the table this wider group of stakeholders?

As you will see from the agenda, these two days will culminate in the formulation of a global Call to Action that will identify high-impact actions and next steps and articulate them in a way that resonates with world leaders and decision-makers.

The outcomes and recommendations from the discussions that will take place today and tomorrow morning will be synthesized into this Call to Action so I encourage you all again to actively contribute to the discussions so your views and suggestions can be reflected. People can also share their thoughts and ideas for the Call to Action by writing them on the comment cards that you all have in your packs. Please make sure that you deposit the in the box, located near the exit of the main conference room, by the coffee break tomorrow morning.

So I am really looking forward to the opportunity over the next two days to continue to learn from the decades of knowledge and experience that many of you have. As I said at the beginning this is a key moment, so I encourage you to be bold in terms of articulating what we know works and the need to deliver that at scale. And I encourage you to think differentially and creatively about how we take forward the challenges we are still struggling to address.

And I want to leave you with one further thing to think about in case anyone was in any doubt about the importance of this moment. In just 50 months time the world will gather at the UN in New York. September 2015, the end point for the MDGs is just 50 months away. Just 50 months to deliver on the commitments made to the world's poorest people at the turn of the Millennium. And importantly, just 50 months for us to deliver on our commitment to enable 100m women to meet their need for family planning. I find that both daunting and exhilarating – but I am inspired every day by the belief that together we really have the power to achieve something on which we will be able to look back and be proud.

I truly believe that by working together, by unleashing the power of this partnership, we can transform the lives of women, their families and communities, now and for generations to come. The opportunity is now. The challenge is clear. Let's make sure we use these next two days to live up to our own expectations and deliver Access for All!

Thank you and enjoy the conference!