

STATE OF THE COALITION
Presentation to the 13th Membership Meeting of the
Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, Paris

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Friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure and indeed pride to welcome you here this morning to the Thirteenth Membership Meeting of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. These meetings are, as many of you know, the one time of the year when we all assemble from across the globe to share ideas, renew contacts, and make new friends. This year we are fortunate in being able to welcome more than 200 participants, representing 36 countries from every continent.

For those of you who are joining us for the first time, we last met in June 2011 in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. That meeting too was a very special event insofar as it coincided with the 10th anniversary of a conference called *Meeting the Challenge*, where the foundations were laid for what would ultimately become the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. In Addis, we looked back at a decade of progress and, in some cases, dramatic change. But we also focused on the present, celebrating the successes of our partners and taking pride in their commitments to increase, as we called the meeting, *Access for All*. Addis was a cause for celebration, it was a time for reflection, and a moment to ponder a very uncertain future.

Today, we meet under very different circumstances. We look out on a future that even six months, let alone a year ago, none of us could ever have imaged. Who among us could have imagined world leaders, standing together, in London, calling upon the international

community to commit and to invest in family planning? Who could have imagined David Cameron, standing before senior representatives of the RH community, and offering to take their questions - on RH no less?

And who could have imagined, barely four months after we left Addis Ababa, that a UN Commission would be established with the aim , not just to promote RMNCH – but to guarantee access to the life saving commodities that make that possible.

And here is the real surprise - who could have imagined that we, as a Coalition, would find ourselves planning our future at precisely this moment in time? We are, without a doubt, in the enviable position of being able to ride the prospect of this new wave. We are setting our agenda for the future precisely at the time when support for our cause has never been so strong. And most importantly, we are doing so from a position of strength.

Over the course of the last half-decade, the Coalition has leveraged millions of dollars in support of both our own work and the cause of RH commodity security more broadly. This year alone, however, we leveraged over US\$23 million, more than double last year's figure which, up until that point, had been the highest since the Coalition was established in 2004.

We also witnessed this year, some other remarkable successes – not the least of which was reducing the price of contraceptive implants. By working together, suppliers and buyers succeeded in saving our community in excess of \$22M. We also saw the prospect of those savings drive increases in procurement – rising from about 2.6M in 2010 to more than 4.2M in first four quarters following the Addis meeting. We saw similar success with the female condom where prices also fell and new initiatives got underway to increase access. These developments, coupled with the very recent and exciting announcement of further reductions

in the price of implants, hold out the potential to avert millions of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and tens of thousands by maternal deaths.

But we are not just about money. We are also about bringing together partners to achieve what no single partner could otherwise do on their own. And this year we saw that power of partnership play itself out in some remarkable ways. Within the space of just over a month, we saw members from across the Coalition pool their knowledge, their ideas and their money to produce on the eve of the London FP Summit, a 6-page FT supplement on RH. That publication yielded public recognition of our work and that of our partners. It increased by nearly eightfold, traffic to our website. And for our colleagues in civil society, that supplement gave voice to nearly 1300 organizations who signed on to a public declaration in support of the Summit.

We saw the RMA Working Group call upon partners from across the Global South to identify policy barriers to commodity security and, with a response rate of an astonishing 80 percent, they were able to publish a compendium of those responses in little over a month. And finally, we saw the emergence of a new formalized Caucus on Maternal Health Commodities - barely nine months after colleagues at Addis called upon us to seek out greater engagement with the maternal health community.

We saw the Coalition's firefighters – our CARhs Group - address 168 separate supply crises. And we saw the PGH accelerate the delivery of more than \$12M for contraceptive implants and in the process, drive the largest procurement in the history of that implant's manufacturer.

This year also yielded a tremendous bounty of new tools and programs – many the product of our Innovation Fund. We saw JSI unveil LAPTOP, a online guide to information on training and other supply chain management courses. We also saw the IRH publish its guide to forecasting

demand for new and underutilized methods where historical trendline data is either limited or non-existent. And we saw PRISMA adapt and translate into Spanish the PATH Forecasting Tool. We also saw, just a few months ago, the re-launch of a tool that has long served the Coalition well – the online library of supply-related publications called SID. Now with more than 7000 records, the tool allows for faster and more efficient searches – including, I might add, new searchable fields for maternal health commodities.

If there is any truth in the expression that people like a winner, then the growth in our membership says a great deal – both about us and how others see us. From our humble beginnings of just a few years ago, we number today over 200 member organizations, making us without a doubt the largest partnership of RH organizations in the world – and half of these are from the global South – representing government, civil society, technical agencies, and manufacturers. We have seen our regional forums, and especially the LAC Forum grow from strength to strength. It not only has its own Executive Committee, but also working groups, annual meetings and – as of this year – its own Innovation Fund.

In February, I was invited by the China Contraceptive Supply Administration - our 159th member organization - to visit representatives of government and industry from across the country – from implant and female condom manufacturers in the north to condom producers in the south. I saw more than I could describe in an entire day. But perhaps most important of all, that trip drove home to me the tremendous potential of effective global partnerships- the window they offer members to contribute to the global dialogue on commodity security, but also the opportunity they provide members to tap into the knowledge – the brain trust - that our broader global community has to offer.

Obviously I am not an unbiased observer and so I can understand how I might be prone to a bit of exaggeration. But for those of you who have read the recent evaluation of the Coalition's work, you will know that I am by no means alone in my opinions. That work – all 200 pages of it - leaves no doubt as to the value we add to the work of our members, the capacity we bring to leverage the power of partnership, and our ability serve as a neutral space where everyone has a voice and every voice counts

Reaching 120M new users by 2020 will require transformational change – and we in the Coalition are eager and well-positioned to help to drive that change. Over the past few days, I've been fortunate to join many of you as you discuss the contributions you, your working groups and forums can make in bringing about such change – from market shaping, to combating stockouts, to addressing the barriers that impede access to life saving maternal health commodities, to holding ourselves accountable for the commitments we make. It would be an understatement to say that I've been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of all our partners - from both the North and South. And I am truly humbled by the confidence in us shown by our donors and others in positions to support our work.

Between now and the end of tomorrow, we will build on the discussions of the past three days. We will hear more about key events and activities that promise to shape our environment in the years to come; and we will try to identify what it is about us, the way we work, and our work that has brought us such success – if only so we can be certain to do more of it in the future.

But our success ultimately depends on the work of our members – and so I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the chairs, leaders and coordinators of the working groups who might not otherwise have the opportunity to address you directly in the coming days. I would like to call on them to say a few words about themselves, the work of their groups and their vision for the future.