

PRESS RELEASE

02 July 2008

G-8 Leaders Should Address Population, Family Planning to Tackle Climate Change and Maternal Deaths, says UNFPA

TOKYO , Japan — The Group of Eight (G-8) should seriously factor in population issues when it deliberates on food security, climate change and maternal health during its upcoming Summit , said UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, at a global meeting of lawmakers here today.

“Preventing unwanted pregnancies through voluntary family planning and guaranteeing people’s right to reproductive health can help slow population growth and moderate its environmental impact,” said Safiye Çağar, UNFPA Director for Information and External Relations, in her address to the G-8 International Parliamentarians’ Conference on Population and Sustainable Development, which was opened by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

Surveys indicate that more than 200 million poor women in developing countries desire smaller families, but lack the means or information to determine when and how many children to have. Globally, the need for contraceptives is projected to grow by 40 per cent over the next 15 years. At the same time, international funding for family planning is declining, and now stands at \$551 million a year, which is less than half of the amount needed.

Besides reducing unwanted pregnancies, expanding access to reproductive health, including family planning, will help countries achieve Millennium Development Goal 5 on maternal health. It can also empower women to take part in family and community decisions, and enable them to acquire more education and engage in paid work.

“Voluntary family planning programmes have a record of success in slowing population growth and saving women from dying in childbirth,” said Ms. Çağar. She called on governments, parliamentarians, civil society, the media, faith-based organizations and the heads of G-8 countries to tackle the unmet need for family planning, strengthen health systems and integrate population factors into their strategies on the environment and climate change.

Approximately 70 legislators and representatives of international and non-governmental organizations from around the world are attending today’s conference, which is organized by the Asian Population and Development Association, and hosted by Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population. Participants are expected to issue a declaration on key global issues that G-8 leaders are to address at their Summit next week.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

For more information:

Tokyo: Kiyoko Ikegami, ikegami@unfpa.org; +81 3 5467 4684

New York: Omar Gharzeddine, gharzeddine@unfpa.org; +1 212 297 5028