Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you here today, together with my Co-Chair of the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD, His Excellency Joaquim Chissano.

When the two of us were first approached to co-chair the Task Force, we saw it as an opportunity to make a difference in shaping the ICPD Beyond 2014 and the Post 2015 Development Framework. The High-Level Task Force for the ICPD consists of people from all corners of the world. It has been guided by the need to confront the different realities of people in today’s world, as well as the future world. We want to see a world that is more unified and equal.

From my experience of co-chairing the Millennium Summit, a huge break-through at that time, I knew that it was possible to make such a leap again.

The international community has the experience of two decades in fulfilling the Cairo Agenda. It also has global connectivity to solve development problems like never before. We have what it takes to give a chance to advancement.

There is no question that the Task Force’s mission is on the right path. Priority must be given to:

1) gender equality and the human rights of women and girls,

2) the rights of adolescents and youth,

3) and sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

This is common sense. But there is also plenty of evidence and facts to support these goals, including in the recent global reports of the Secretary-General and of UNFPA to the Commission on Population and Development.
The ICPD Programme of Action originally envisioned that development will be achieved when all individuals have the information and means to decide on their sexual and reproductive lives free from violence, coercion and discrimination. While we celebrate the successes of the past 20 years, we must also humbly recognize that too many women, young people and especially marginalized communities are being left out of the Cairo promise.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a choice to make: We can give into our fears and leave others to suffer from discrimination and violence. Or we can be brave enough to help others to have the same rights we have; the right for every woman, girl, boy and man to decide about their own bodies, sexuality, relationships and marriage. These are human rights first and foremost. They are the foundation of any just and equitable society.

Millions of women and girls aspire for children, but for an amount of children that they can afford to nurture properly. For this reason they need access to contraception. These women and girls want to make sure that their daughters are not caught in a spiral of poverty, and they need a global commitment from us.

Women and girls die every day because of unsafe abortions, due to restrictive laws and lack of safe abortion services. Most of these women are poor and young. At least 35 per cent of women around the world experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights help girls and women finish their education, stay healthy, join the labour force and earn higher wages. At the macro-level, this means opportunities for eradicating poverty and for economic growth. On the other hand, where women have been enabled to enter the labour force, countries register increases in their GDP. Studies from Kenya, Brazil, and India show that delaying adolescent childbearing could have increased economic productivity by billions of dollars ($3.4, $3.5, and $7.7 billion dollars, respectively).

We don’t need to be experts; we just need to be logical!

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Sexual and reproductive rights are a **prerequisite** for achieving poverty eradication, gender equality and sustainable development. These are not optional issues for the global agenda.

The regional and global outcomes of the ICPD review process, and the Secretary-General’s report on the ICPD Beyond 2014 agenda, embraced many important issues:

- We need legal reforms and policies that recognize and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all individuals, regardless of who they are, without distinction of any kind.
- Justice mechanisms should be put in place for when these rights are violated. Without them, we have rights on paper, not in practice.
- Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services means that quality services should be free or affordable. They need to be provided without discrimination.
- Universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people gives necessary and age-appropriate information.
- Universal access to critical services for all victims of gender-based and sexual violence, including to post-rape care, helps victims become survivors. Alongside with this we need prevention campaigns to end violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank you for being here today. Your words have convinced me that we are capable of fulfilling our human rights obligations. These are basic parts of well-being for people everywhere. These are part of a universal agenda – for both going beyond ICPD and beyond the MDGs towards Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.