Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good evening.

It is a pleasure to be here as Co-Chair of the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD, joined by other Task Force Members - Minister Tedros and Musimbi. All three of us are also members of the Global Leaders Council, whom we thank for organizing this event.

The High-Level Task Force is an independent body of leaders from all regions of the world. Our mandate is to provide a leading voice for sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, stressing the human rights of women, gender equality and the rights and participation of young people. Our mission is to secure commitments across UN processes on these fundamental human rights and freedoms, especially throughout the Cairo+20 process and for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

I think all of us here tonight want the same thing: that the new agenda will help make the world one where all human rights, of all people, are respected and protected.

If we want to achieve that vision, sexual and reproductive health and rights must be affirmed as a non-negotiable basis of the post-2015 agenda. Unless these rights are fully realized, progress towards ending poverty and achieving sustainable development will continue to be undermined.

Sexual and reproductive rights deal with the most basic, private aspects of our lives. If people cannot decide for themselves on these most private matters - sexuality, marriage, children - how can we expect them to take broader responsibility for their communities and the planet.

Despite their universality, for all people, in all countries and regions --sexual and reproductive rights are often called ‘controversial’. In some countries politicians find them often too sensitive and private even to discuss, but at the same time the legislation can be most brutal and violating human rights.

As we see, the consequences of this hypocrisy is devastating. We have heard during these days a lot of concrete examples of everyday life:
• Every day, 800 women and girls die from preventable causes of pregnancy and childbirth.
• Maternal mortality is the leading cause of death for adolescent girls in many countries.
• Every year, 20 million women and girls undergo an unsafe abortion, and nearly 50 thousand die as a result, because they don’t have access to safe, legal abortion.
• Every 30 seconds, a young person acquires HIV.
• At least 1 in 3 women and adolescent girls are subjected to gender-based violence in their lifetime.
• And across the world, everyday, countless people face discrimination, harassment, persecution and violence simply because of who they are--based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

But the situation is not hopeless. We have cost-effective solutions to these problems. We need bold political leadership. When these rights are upheld, women, girls, and young people can complete their education, get better jobs with better wages, and rise to their full potential in economic, political, and social life. Investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights is a very smart investment.

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Ladies and gentlemen: the Task Force will continue its call for targets in the Post-2015 Agenda to fulfill these fundamental human rights. So many of you here are already on board and partners in this journey. Any effective global agenda must include:

• A strong stand-alone goal on gender equality and the human rights of women and girls—including to prevent gender-based violence, end harmful practices within a generation and ensure all survivors have access to justice and services;
• Priority here has to be given especially to the young and adolescents;
• And it should have targets for achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, including comprehensive sexuality education.

I am happy that you are all here. Let us continue our important work.

Thank you.