

# Statement Delivered at the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD59) on behalf of the Global Leaders Network for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health

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Distinguished Delegates,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Chairperson,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Global Leaders Network for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, a coalition of Heads of State and Government from Denmark, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Senegal and Somalia and my own country South Africa, committed to advancing the health and wellbeing of women, children and adolescents.

The Global Leaders Network's mission is to ensure women, children, and adolescents are at the heart of equitable, primary health care-driven Universal Health Coverage and strengthened health systems. It champions sustainable domestic resource mobilization and strategic global partnerships for RMNCAH, secures high-level political commitment linked to tangible outcomes and promotes progressive legal and policy frameworks that ensure access, quality, choice, and dignity in sexual and reproductive health services.

With the 2030 deadline fast approaching, inequality in income, education, and health persists and investment in development remains on the decline. This is manifested in the distressing trends on the overall population health and economic outcomes.

Today's discussions on population dynamics, technology and research take place at a decisive moment. Demographic change is reshaping societies across every region. For some countries this means rapidly growing youth populations, while others face ageing societies. Whether these trends become engines of prosperity or sources of inequality will depend on the investments we make in people. Harnessing demographic opportunities requires resilient health systems underpinned by UHC and investment in women, children, and adolescents.

Technology and scientific research are transforming how societies generate knowledge, deliver services and strengthen health systems. Digital health tools, improved data systems and scientific innovation hold enormous potential to accelerate progress towards the

## Sustainable Development Goals.

However, technology must not deepen inequality between countries or within societies. It must become a tool for equity, enabling every woman, child and adolescent to access knowledge, health services and opportunity.

Yet what remains concerning is that access to innovation, research capacity and digital infrastructure remains deeply uneven. Many developing countries continue to face structural barriers that limit their ability to benefit fully from technological progress. Ensuring equitable access to innovation is therefore not only a development priority, but an essential element of the right to development.

At the same time, many developing countries face mounting fiscal constraints and unsustainable debt burdens that limit their ability to invest in health systems, education and research.

At a time when global challenges are increasing and financing that is crucial for women's, children's and adolescents' health is declining, we risk reversing decades of progress and placing millions of lives at greater peril. In particular, advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, strengthening health systems and ensuring equitable access to quality services remain essential to unlocking the full potential of populations.

Renewed efforts toward resource mobilisation are therefore essential. This includes strengthening domestic investment in health systems, expanding international partnerships and supporting innovative financing approaches that sustain progress.



Excellencies,

Women, children and adolescents must remain at the centre of these efforts. Persistent gender and digital divides mean that women and girls are still less likely to benefit from technological progress. Young people must be empowered not only as users of technology, but as co-creators, policy advisors, innovators and leaders shaping their societies.

The Global Leaders Network therefore calls for renewed political leadership and action at the highest level, global solidarity and sustained investment to ensure that technology and research serve the wellbeing of all people.

By investing in women, children and adolescents, we invest in healthier societies, stronger economies and a more sustainable future.

I thank you