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U.N. marks 20th anniversary of Cairo conference

Landmark agreement called for improving maternal health, not legalizing abortion

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Today a special session of the United Nations General Assembly will mark the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which took place in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994. The ICPD adopted a [Program of Action](#) that calls for reducing maternal mortality and morbidity, among other goals; it does not call for the legalization or expansion of abortion. The special session will review the progress that has been made and consider the challenges going forward.

“The world has made headway toward implementing the Program of Action, but much work remains to support women and their children,” says Scott Fischbach, Executive Director of Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Global Outreach (MCCL GO), a U.N.-accredited non-governmental organization. “We can save women’s lives with prenatal care, skilled birth attendants, emergency obstetric care, basic sanitation and clean water. These measures have helped substantially reduce maternal mortality in large parts of the world. They must be extended to the places where basic health care is still lacking.”

The Program of Action affirms the equal dignity and right to life of every human being (chapter II, principle 1). It also states that abortion should never be promoted as a method of family planning (paragraph 7.24) and that changes to abortion policy should be made at the local or national level (paragraph 8.25).

Yet international abortion advocacy groups argue that abortion must be legalized worldwide to protect women’s health. “That is not true,” Fischbach notes. “Maternal health depends on the quality of maternal health care, not on the legal status or availability of abortion. Countries such as Ireland, Chile and Malta prohibit most or all abortions and have a very low incidence of maternal mortality.”

The [47th session](#) of the Commission on Population and Development, which was held last April at the United Nations in New York, considered the status of the ICPD Program of Action. MCCL GO [addressed the assembly](#) and urged U.N. delegates to avoid pushing abortion as the international community looks to formulate a new global development agenda.

“Legalizing abortion does nothing to address the underlying issue of poor health care,” Fischbach explained. “Member states should reject all efforts to legalize or promote abortions and instead focus on maternal health care and healthy reproductive outcomes.”

MCCL GO is a pro-life NGO global outreach program of the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Education Fund. Learn more at www.mccl-go.org.

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