It has been a landmark year for the health of women and children. The world is making important progress in reducing the number of children dying from preventable causes. After six decades of little progress in reducing under-five mortality to less than 10 million, this past decade has seen a steady decline in child deaths. The publication of new maternal mortality data confirmed that since 1990 there has been a decline of one-third in the numbers of women dying in childbirth, showing that progress on Millennium Development Goal 5 is being made.

For the first time – through the Muskoka Initiative led by the Canadian Government – heads of state of the group of 8 countries (G8) committed US$ 5 billion to improving maternal, child and newborn health. The African Union summit focused on “Maternal and Child Health and Development in Africa” and committed to action in their countries through a coordinated campaign to be delivered by the African Union Commission and a new task force that will review progress every year until 2015. The United Nations General Assembly discussed the theme in a special event at which the Secretary-General launched a Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, developed with the support of the World Health Organization. The partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health brings together many of the key global institutions and actors – governments, United Nations organizations, donor agencies, professional associations, academics and civil society – who will need to carry out the work.

We see the Forum as an opportunity for all partners to take inspiration from the landmark events of 2010 for women’s and children’s health. We then need to reinvigorate our efforts and hold each other accountable if we are to realize our shared global commitments to health, development and human rights.

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