



Check against Delivery

## **World Summit for the Information Society**

### **Statement to the Plenary**

**by**

**Imelda Henkin  
Deputy Executive Director  
(Management)  
United Nations Population Fund**

**Geneva, 12 December 2003**

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

On behalf of UNFPA, I am very pleased to address this important session and to propose how we might more actively address the major development challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals, using the promise of modern technologies. It is clear from the many statements from this floor that the 'poverty divide' and the 'digital divide' are inextricably linked. UNFPA believes that technology has a vital part to play in creating a new form of empowerment if we can use it to benefit the poorest among us by fostering knowledge generation and sharing at all levels of society.

UNFPA has extensive knowledge on the core issues of our mandate and we are actively sharing our knowledge through the use of communication technologies such as local and community radio, entertainment-education and use of telephone hotlines and the Internet. UNFPA was the first United Nations agency to establish a topical website, the Population and Reproductive Health Portal, within the Development Gateway system, and our UNFPA website provides up-to-the-minute reports about UNFPA activities worldwide. UNFPA has also been in the forefront in strengthening regional capacities through the application of new technologies for population data collection, processing, dissemination and presentation.

Almost three years ago, UNFPA initiated an internal transition process for the purpose of strengthening the organization to make it better able to serve the population and reproductive health development needs of the developing countries we exist to serve. We believe that we can provide better support for our development partners if we are able to draw upon the best available experience within our organization as well as the lessons learned by our partners. Toward this end, we are strengthening our internal management system through a new Enterprise Resource Planning exercise, which we are launching jointly with UNDP and other UN agencies next month.

UNFPA has also developed a new approach to knowledge sharing which is proving to be quite innovative. Our knowledge sharing strategy capitalizes on the experiential and operational knowledge of our staff, which is now captured in Knowledge Assets. We have developed tools to collect, distill, synthesize and continuously update these Assets. Our in-house on-line Knowledge Asset Development tool (KADS) is now in use in UNFPA and we expect to expand its use in 2004.

UNFPA recognizes that an organisation's knowledge is a major resource that must be captured, harnessed and applied for development. UNFPA also recognizes that it is equally important for countries and communities to be able to capture, synthesize and apply knowledge that is vital for their own development. UNFPA is very grateful for the support we have received from a variety of organizations to develop this tool for knowledge asset development and we feel a strong obligation to make the results of our innovation available to the world development community in particular.

It is with great pleasure that UNFPA and the Government of Ireland are announcing the development of a portable Knowledge Asset Development System (pKADS) as open source software that will be freely available to all who wish to use it. pKADS was made possible through the generous financial support of the Government of Ireland and the technical support of the Business Information Systems, University College Cork, Ireland. We are particularly grateful to Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern for his government's help in making this a reality. We are very pleased to launch this tool here

at the WSIS as a demonstration of UNFPA's commitment to supporting the empowerment of countries and communities to generate and capture their own locally-generated knowledge and to apply this knowledge and experience toward local development issues. Because it is being made available in open source software, the pKADS tool can be freely developed in local languages and UNFPA plans to make it available in French and Spanish by the end of January 2004. We are also very pleased to learn that the Government of Jordan has agreed to convert the software into Arabic.

The central principle of pKADS is a tool for knowledge sharing that can be shared as widely as possible and easily adapted to different development challenges that reflect local culture and experiences. We at UNFPA believe that respect for cultural differences and experiences should be at the heart of the World Summit for the Information Society and that capturing, synthesizing and sharing these experiences could pave the way for the development process as a basis for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

- - -

*UNFPA is the world's largest multilateral source of population assistance. Since it became operational in 1969, the Fund has provided substantial assistance to developing countries, at their request, to meet reproductive health needs and support development efforts.*