

Amy Coen
President, Population Action International
Remarks for Cairo Bill Press Conference
July 8, 2004
Cannon House Office Building, Room 122

Background Information: Three members of Congress, Reps. Joseph Crowley (D-NY), Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) joined with leading organizations in the field for a presentation of a "Cairo Bill" detailing the degree to which the United States has fallen short of its Cairo promises.

Remarks of Amy Coen:

Ten years ago there were profound events that had the potential to transform our world:

- Nelson Mandela was elected president of South Africa;
- The White House launched its first web site;
- And 179 countries reached a landmark agreement to provide reproductive health care and education for all by 2015.

What will be on that list in 2015? It's up to us... It could read:

- The spread of HIV/AIDS was greatly decreased;
- Three billion people – the largest generation in history entering their reproductive age– all had access to voluntary family planning and reproductive health care, enabling them to have fewer children, allowing their families to invest more in the education and health of those children;
- A more peaceful and politically stable world was created.

We, the United States, pledged, along with other donor countries, to provide one-third of the financing needed to achieve those goals.

The Programme of Action was – and still is – a landmark call to action. But today it is tragically underfunded.

In our research and analysis, Population Action International, found that donor countries have met only one-third of their ICPD pledges. This study, *Progress and Promises*, is a comprehensive review of international support for ICPD and will be released this fall.

As of 1991, the U.S. was more than \$8 billion behind. The money pledged -- but not paid -- by the United States could have prevented 113 million unintended pregnancies, and by extension 48 million abortions, 50 million unplanned births, and 309,800 pregnancy related deaths.

Allocating less than 1% of our annual budget for foreign assistance and continuing to de-fund the UN Population Fund is not in our national interest.

According to UNFPA, the expected U.S. contribution of \$34 million to the UN Fund in 2002 would have prevented:

- 2 million pregnancies;
- Nearly 800,000 induced abortions;
- 4,700 maternal deaths;
- nearly 60,000 cases of serious maternal illness; and
- over 77,000 infant and child deaths.

For too long, the UN Population Fund has been the victim of ideological battles and domestic politics here in the U.S. – this is shameful.

If the landmark Cairo Programme of Action is ever to be achieved, the United States must once again be a partner in supporting the UN Population Fund -- the largest international source of funding for population and reproductive health programs.

That’s why tomorrow’s vote is so important. Tomorrow the House Appropriations Committee will have a golden opportunity to do just that by adopting the Lowey amendment. The largest number of young people in history are entering their reproductive years, and U.S. funding for UNFPA is essential to meeting their most basic family planning and reproductive health care needs. The amendment that will be offered by Congresswoman Lowey with the support of Congressman Kirk will provide \$25 million to the UNFPA.

Their amendment makes clear that U.S. funds cannot be spent in China. It targets the money to six countries in the Middle East, Southwestern Asia, and Africa -- such as Iraq and Afghanistan -- with both acute family planning needs and significant national security implications. Afghanistan’s maternal and childhood mortality rates are among the highest in the world, and it has an exceptionally high fertility rate (nearly 7 children per mother). In Iraq, the fertility rate is nearly 5 children per mother.

We know what needs to be done. And reestablishing U.S. leadership vis-à-vis the UN Population Fund is a vital part of those efforts.

So I hope all of you will do what you can to support the Lowey amendment – and make your voices heard by the House Appropriations Committee.