KEEPING PROMISES, MEASURING RESULTS
HEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT PRESENTED AT WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 19 May 2011 – The United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health presented their report, Keeping Promises, Measuring Results, and recommendations to increase the likelihood that pledges for women's and children's health are honoured and that resources are spent in the most effective way to save lives. The advance copy of the report was presented at a technical briefing today during the 64th World Health Assembly.

"All partners are accountable for the promises they make and the health policies and programmes they design and implement," says President Jakaya Kikwete, from the United Republic of Tanzania and one of the co-chairs of the Commission. "Tracking resources and results of public health spending are critical for transparency, credibility and ensuring that much-needed funds are used for their intended purposes and to reach those who need them most."

The report's ten recommendations include:
1. increasing the number of countries with well-developed systems to measure births, deaths and causes of deaths;
2. measuring against 11 common indicators on reproductive, maternal and child health;
3. helping countries integrate the use of Information and Communication Technologies in their national health information systems;
4. countries with high maternal and child deaths track and report resource indicators;
5. country governments and major development partners put "compacts" in place that require reporting, based on country format, on externally funded expenditures and predictable commitments;
6. all governments have the capacity to regularly review health spending and to relate spending to commitments;
7. countries have established national accountability mechanisms that are transparent, inclusive of stakeholders and recommend action as necessary;
8. all stakeholders are publicly sharing information on commitments, resources provided and results achieved annually at both national and international levels;
9. the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance

Committee (OECD-DAC) agree on how to better capture all reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health spending by development partners;
10. an independent Expert Review Group is reporting regularly to the UN Secretary-General on results and resources related to the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health and progress of the implementation of these recommendations.

“The Commission has developed bold yet practical measures that will help save the lives of mothers and children living in the world's poorest countries," says Prime Minister Stephen Harper from Canada, the other co-chair of the Commission. "Through our collective efforts we will ensure tangible progress in achieving our goals, but only if we remain fully committed to making the recommendations in this report a reality."

Accountability is an essential element of the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health aimed at saving the lives of 16 million women and children under five years of age by 2015. The 30 members of the Commission were tasked to develop a mechanism for holding donors accountable for their pledges and holding countries responsible for how well the money is spent to accelerate progress towards the health-related Millennium Development Goals.

“The report and its recommendations are a major achievement for public health and will help us to save the lives of women and children," explains Dr Margaret Chan, the World Health Organization's Director-General and covice chair of the Commission. "But our work is only beginning. One of our top priorities must be investing in helping countries build the capacity needed to capture this health information – that means giving them the financial and technical resources required to monitor things such as births, deaths and causes of deaths, and achieve the mutual accountability needed to save women and children from dying.”
New information and communication technologies (ICTs) will play an important role in improving the collection, sharing and analysis of health data.

"With mobile connectivity now widespread in even the world's poorest countries, ICTs offer a unique and powerful opportunity to bridge the health development gap," says the International Telecommunication Union's Secretary-General and other co-vice chair of the Commission, Dr Hamadoun Touré. "In addition to facilitating data gathering, sharing and analysis, platforms like the Internet and social media can also be used as tools to create safe and empowering spaces for women, where they can obtain accurate, up-to-the-minute health information in a

confidential, multilingual environments."

The report is the result of more than five months of in-depth discussions and work across a high-level group of global leaders and health experts. Having concluded it's work, the Commission will present it's report to the Secretary-General.

More details on the Commission and the advance copy of the report can be found on the Internet at:
www.everywomaneverychild.org/accountability_commission