



Embargoed for release Wednesday 20 October MEDIA RELEASE

Women and War: Australia's Role in Upholding Security Council Resolution 1325

Minister for Status of Women Kate Ellis to launch UN's State of World Population 2010 Report

**10:00am Wednesday 20 October
Parliament House Theatre, Canberra**

This week, the Australian Parliament will discuss Australia's involvement in the war in Afghanistan. There will be talk of troop numbers, firepower, military progress....but what attention will be given to the hidden victims of war?

Afghanistan is one of the worst countries in the world to be a woman – according to the United Nations **State of World Population 2010** launched today, which shows that the maternal mortality rate in Afghanistan is the second highest in the world, with 1800/100 000 women dying from mainly preventable causes in pregnancy and childbirth. In Australia, the rate is 4/100 000. So what is our obligation to Afghan women? When we go to war, do we have a responsibility to safeguard women's rights?

The report traces some of the most devastating conflicts and natural disasters of the last two decades, and how they have led to global efforts, at the grass-roots and international levels, to redefine women's place in a war zone.

This report coincides with the 10th anniversary of **Security Council Resolution 1325**, which called on parties to armed conflicts to take measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and called for greater involvement by women in negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

Security Council Resolution 1325 was the first time the United Nations recognised women's security as an issue of national and international security, and the indispensable role of women in conflict resolution and peace-building.

Media Conference: Parliament House Theatre, 10.00 am Wednesday 20 October 2010

- Chair - Virginia Haussegger, ABC TV News
- The Hon Kate Ellis, Minister for Status of Women
- Senator Claire Moore, Chair of Parliamentary Group on Population and Development
- Mr. Najib Assifi, UNFPA Deputy Regional Director Asia Pacific
- Mr Dana Hovig, Chief Executive, Marie Stopes International Global Partnership

10.30am Seminar "Gender and Conflict" - Chair Virginia Haussegger, ABC TV News

- Ms Naomi Steer, National Director, Australia for UNHCR
- Professor Anthony Zwi, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, UNSW
- Dr Bina D'Costa, Centre for International Governance and Justice, ANU
- Ms Madeleine Willis, ANU
- Delia Quigley, AFP

UN's State of World Population 2010 Report

The State of World Population 2010 explores how conflict and protracted humanitarian emergencies affect women and girls – and men and boys – and shows how many women and young people have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

It is also about the special challenges women face in conflict or in humanitarian emergencies and how women themselves are responding, healing wounds, moving forward, and not just helping the communities return to the status quo, but also building new nations on foundation of equal rights and opportunities.

Through the personal stories of women who survived the rape camps of the Bosnia and Herzegovina war; the women of Palestine who give birth in cars at check points; and the women in Timor Leste who want access to family planning so they can feed their families, we hear messages of resilience, hope and determination to rebuild lives and communities.

Women are not just the victims of the brutality of war, but also of the widespread systemic failures that often occur in conjunction with conflict or crisis.

When governments cannot maintain health systems, it is women's basic health that suffers the most. Women and their needs are often forgotten or overlooked prior to conflict which exacerbates the situation when crisis strikes. Reproductive health is basic health and it needs attention in crisis situation alongside fundamentals like food and clean water.

Women do not stop getting pregnant or having babies when a disaster strikes. In a crisis or refugee situation, one in five women of child-bearing age is likely to be pregnant. Conflicts and natural disasters put these women and their babies at risk because of the sudden loss of medical support, compounded in many cases, by trauma, malnutrition or disease and exposure to violence. This situation was recently highlighted by the floods in Pakistan where over 2,000 women were estimated to be giving birth each day in flood-affected areas.

In regions where skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care are not available an unplanned pregnancy can be fatal.

**

Journalists may arrange access to the **embargoed** report and related materials—a summary, press release, and visuals (B-roll, short video clips, sound bites and statements) by contacting the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance Tel: 02 6249 6566

For a list of Australian interview opportunities please see following page.

All interviewees can be available at Parliament House from 6:30am on Wednesday 20 October 2010.

****Media enquires can be directed to Rose McConnell 0432 684 030**

Interview Opportunities:

Mr. Najib Assifi, UNFPA Deputy Regional Director for Asia Pacific

Mr. Assifi has nearly 30 years experience working with the United Nations including over 15 years with the UNFPA. Mr. Assifi has carried out technical missions in most of the Asia Pacific region. Prior to his current posting, Najib served as the Director of the Pacific Sub-regional office and UNFPA Representative for the Pacific Island Countries for four years. Mr. Assifi has also worked for the Queensland Health Department and served for 7 years as Manager-Health Promotions for the Queensland Health Department. Najib leads by example and religiously abides by the UNFPA policy of the planning of family wisely.

Senator Claire Moore, Chair of the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development

Senator Moore has been Chair of the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD) for nearly 4 years and prior to this was an active member of the group. The PGPD is a cross-party group of parliamentarians from federal, state and territory government in Australia with a particular interest in sexual and reproductive health and population and development issues as they affect gender equality. The PGPD was established following the 1994

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Senator Moore has been active in ensuring Australia upholds its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action.

Mr Dana Hovig, CEO, Marie Stopes International Global Partnership

Mr Dana Hovig is attending the report of the launch as a key note speaker. Mr Hovig has over 20 years experience in the delivery of global family planning programs with compelling insights into the challenges facing many communities who have needs to family planning. Mr Hovig also has significant knowledge in working with communities in disaster and conflict through the Reproductive Health Access, Information and Services in Emergencies (RAISE) Initiative of which Marie Stopes is a partner.

Ms Mary Mertin-Ryan, CEO, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA)

Ms Mary Mertin-Ryan is the host of the report launch in partnership with UNFPA and the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development. ARHA is a key advocacy partner in the AusAID funded SPRINT Initiative which aims to ensure that sexual and reproductive health are a standard component of emergency response—most recently implemented as part of the Pakistan flood response.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. For more information go to www.unfpa.org

ARHA, the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, works closely with parliamentarians, NGOs, media and civil society to garner political and public support for addressing sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights issues. We advocate to parliamentarians and government for policy and legislative change to enhance sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights of women in Australia and our Asia-Pacific region. ARHA serves as Secretariat to the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, a group of federal and state/territory parliamentarians committed to population, development and reproductive health issues. The partnership between ARHA and the PGPD is uniquely effective in Australia for achieving change in the sector. ARHA encourages increased support in Australia's overseas aid program for the principles of the ICPD and the MDGs. For more information go to www.arha.org.au

PGPD, the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, is a cross-party group of federal and state/territory parliamentarians that supports the empowerment of women and girls through its commitment to gender equality and the advancement of women as set out in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. The PGPD affirms that equality goes hand-in-hand with investments in sexual and reproductive health, education and economic opportunity. Taken together these investments can lift millions of people out of poverty. For more information go to www.pgpd.asn.au

About Marie Stopes International Global Partnership: Marie Stopes provides life-saving sexual and reproductive healthcare support and services to women and their families through programs which help early 7 million people in over 40 countries around the world every year. For more information, visit www.mariestopes.org or call Toll Free 1800 003 707.

All interviewees can be available at Parliament House from 6:30am on Wednesday 20 October 2010.

*****Media enquires can be directed to Rose McConnell 0432 684 030**