



Press release

The President of the Republic of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, is launching the **Deliver Now for Women + Children Campaign**, a regional initiative in pursuit of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.

With President Bachelet as hostess and Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg as guest of honour, the initiative was unveiled for the first time at the Moneda Palace in Santiago Chile. Other dignitaries included: the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Dr Mirta Roses; the Director of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Dr Francisco Songane; the Chilean Minister of Health, Dr María Soledad Barría; the PAHO/WHO Representative in Chile, Dr Juan Manuel Sotelo; and ministers of health from several countries throughout the region.

President Bachelet is personally committed to maternal and newborn health: "Deliver Now is a very important and special regional initiative, because in this region, 400 children die before they are 5 and 22 thousand women die due to lack of access to health services because they are poor, because poor nutrition exposes them to higher risks associated with childbirth, a fact that is even worse in other regions of the world", said President Bachelet during the visit of Prime Minister Stoltenberg to Santiago.

This initiative aims to facilitate access to basic health resources in the context of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, thereby avoiding the deaths of mothers, newborns and children around the world. In the first phase of this initiative, four countries (Chile, Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia) will pursue specific plans and activities to train midwives or birth attendants to help with deliveries and manage obstetric risks, in addition to sharing expertise on delivery care in a multicultural context so that health systems respect different cultural values.

The initiative goes beyond the area of health. This initiative launched by President Bachelet and additionally spearheaded by Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula represents a political commitment at the very highest level. Provision is also being made for sustained funding and various regional and national publicity campaigns to broadcast the initiative and its activities. Efforts are also being made to mobilize the communities most directly affected with a view to changing attitudes and behaviour, thereby creating a demand for health services that will be met by the enhanced capacity of health professionals, both in terms of quality and quantity, that training and governance initiatives will engender.

Other countries already signed up to the initiative include Paraguay, Nicaragua and Peru.



They will attend a meeting with the countries taking part in the initial phase. Cuba, Honduras and Haiti, the country with the highest rate of maternal and child mortality, have also signalled their intention to join this initiative, and a process of sharing experiences and lessons learned has been initiated with them, as well as training and governance activities designed to improve health systems across the region.

Within the framework of this initiative, governments are working with international organizations, cooperation agencies, civil society organizations, professional associations and other institutions.

The launch ceremony also included a small sample of paintings from the Art for Health collection, a joint project of the World Health Organization and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health designed to empower women and raise awareness of sexual, reproductive and family health. The catalogue accompanying this exhibition outlines the most important data about maternal, newborn and child health in the region and calls for urgent action to bring about change.

The aim of this campaign is to eliminate a number of preventable conditions that have adverse consequences for maternal health. In conclusion, Dr Mirta Roses stated that: "Most of the almost 10 million maternal and child deaths that occur each year around the world could be prevented if women had access to professional care during childbirth, and it is our responsibility to do what we can to prevent these deaths".

Notes for the editors:

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