



SPEAKING NOTES FOR MINISTERIAL PANEL DISCUSSION

PMNCH 13TH ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY BREAKFAST 80TH UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 2025

FOCUS OF INTERVENTION: Why women's, children's and adolescents' health should be a priority and how to ensure equitable access to services?

Monday 22 September, 08:00-10:00 EDT
(Breakfast served 07:30-08:00 EDT)

Venue: Harvard Club (Biddle Room), 35 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036

5 minutes intervention

1. Programme Director, Dr. Gitahi, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, partners, and colleagues, good morning.
2. It is a great honour to address you today on behalf of South Africa, and I thank PMNCH and its partners for convening this crucial discussion on the eve of the UNGA General Debate. The health of women, children, and adolescents must remain a top political priority.
3. One year ago, we discussed what it would take to ensure that no woman dies while giving birth and that every child has a chance to survive. Today, we must ask ourselves what has changed. The challenges have only grown, yet our efforts must meet them with urgency, boldness, and courage. We are

at a critical juncture where the health and rights of these populations are threatened by global instability, climate crises, and poor domestic health financing.

4. We commend the PMNCH's 2026–2030 Strategy, which, built on decades of experience, reaffirms the power of partnership. By mobilizing its 1,500 partners, PMNCH can generate the necessary political will and financial support to build a better future for our most vulnerable populations.

5. South Africa's commitment to women's, children's, and adolescents' health is built on four key pillars that align with this new strategy:

a. **Collaborative Advocacy:** We are inspired by President Cyril Ramaphosa's words: "If we secure the health of every woman, child, and adolescent, we will fundamentally improve the health and well-being of all Humanity." This principle underpins our belief that saving lives is sacrosanct and can only be achieved by working with all role players, including traditional leaders and civil society.

b. **Leveraging Digital Transformation:** In South Africa, we launched MomConnect, a digital platform that supports women during pregnancy and early motherhood, providing essential health information that saves lives and improves health outcomes.

c. **Prioritizing the Nexus of Climate and Health:** Children are often the first casualties of wars and climate change.

Prioritizing their health in the face of this global crisis is not just a policy choice; it is a moral imperative.

d. **Strengthened Accountability:** Every leader must push for robust regional mechanisms to hold governments accountable. We must ensure that promises translate into tangible, measurable outcomes.

6. South Africa is a proud champion of the PMNCH **Collaborative Advocacy Action Plan, or CAAP**. Under the leadership of his Excellency, President Ramaphosa, who also chairs the Global Leaders Network, we are driving a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to prioritise women's, children's and adolescents' health and to ensure equitable access to services.

7. Following a sudden and significant funding cut, South Africa immediately took steps to maintain essential services. Our focus has been on equity and justice as health is a human right, ensuring that young girls and pregnant women do not disproportionately bear the burden, especially concerning sexual and reproductive health services. This has been done through the following interventions:

a. Our **National Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide** is a direct and forceful response to unconscionable violence against women, girls, and children. We have committed R1.6 billion to this effort, working hand-in-hand with civil society to end gender-based violence.

b. Our **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination program** is a cornerstone of our efforts to protect young girls. Since

its inception in 2014 we have vaccinated more than 6 million girls between the ages of 9 and 14 years.

- c. Our **Mom-Connect digital health service** has reached a significant milestone in its 11 years. Over 5.9 million mothers have registered, and a recent report shows that 96% of surveyed mothers are attending at least four antenatal care visits, a substantial increase from 76% in 2016.
- 8. These initiatives have produced measurable results. Our facility maternal mortality rate has been significantly reduced, dropping from over 240 to 97 per 100,000 live births. But I must also confess that our change in direction on HIV/AIDS in the year 2010 contributed immensely for this drop in maternal mortality.
- 9. As a way forward, we wish to encourage PMNCH to accelerate the implementation of the strategy, building on the successes of the Global Leaders Network under the stewardship of President Ramaphosa.
- 10. We are also calling for women, children, and adolescents to be included as a standing agenda at regional forums, such as the African Union Summit.
- 11. At the global level, Multilateralism is a life-saving imperative when guided by humanitarian principles and grounded in equity.

12. Yet, we are witnessing an alarming trend: the defunding of global health programs, particularly those focused on Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health.
13. Let us reaffirm our shared commitment to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
14. In conclusion, I would like to thank PMNCH, the Global Forum for Adolescents, and the UNGA for this platform.
15. The Rt Honourable Clark has attested how difficult it is to be a Minister of Health, I can also attest to that.