



**STATEMENT BY NIYI OJUOLAPE,
UNFPA GHANA COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE
AT THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE
AT
JUBILEE PARK, BOLGATANGA, UPPER EAST REGION
ON MONDAY, 06 MAY 2019**

Observe Protocol

- Mr. Chairman – Your Excellency, The Paramount Chief of Kologo Traditional Area.
 - Your Excellency, Hon. Paulina Abayage - Upper East Regional Minister
 - Representative of the Minister of Health
 - Upper East Regional Director of Health Services
 - Presidents and Executives of Midwives Associations
 - Distinguished Midwives
 - Development Partners
 - Ladies and Gentlemen
1. On the International Day of the Midwife, I extend the warm felicitations of the UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem.
 2. UNFPA, is the global lead UN agency on midwifery and an advocate for enhanced investments in quality midwifery services. We celebrate today, your achievements towards improving sexual, reproductive,



maternal and newborn health outcomes in Ghana and globally. Your industrious and unwavering work contributes significantly to Ghana's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and is thus recognised and appreciated.

3. Your Excellency, each year 303,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth, and almost 2.6 million babies die in the first few weeks of birth. 99% of these deaths occur in developing countries, therefore we need to urgently address the global shortage of midwives and ensure that they are competent and properly educated and trained to global standards.
4. This year, UNFPA celebrates 50 years of existence as well as the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its landmark Programme of Action that began to focus more on sexual and reproductive health and rights with regards to family planning. The theme for this year's International Day of the Midwife celebration is therefore apt: Midwives are indeed defenders of women's basic right to quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services. Midwives are critical players in ensuring that women can enjoy the fulfilment of these rights.
5. According to the 2017 Ghana Maternal Health Survey, the maternal mortality ratio is 310 deaths per 100,000 live births. While this is laudable progress, it is not enough. Women and girls continue to die



every day from complications of pregnancy and childbirth; whilst others develop complications, including obstetric fistula. We at UNFPA strive, through one of our three transformative results, to achieve zero preventable maternal deaths.

6. UNFPA works closely with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), global and national partners, including the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Nursing and Midwifery Council and midwifery associations. UNFPA has provided support to over 700 midwifery schools globally and in Ghana, UNFPA, through the Maternal and Thematic Health fund, supports over 40 midwifery schools with books, training equipment and materials, as well as and training faculty.

7. Days like this bring us closer to the lives of the people we celebrate. The story of Agnes Addy whom I am very sure is here with us today. She shared some thoughts with me last Friday. Six years into her service Ms Addy became the best Midwife here in the Upper East Region in 2018. She is one like many of her colleagues, who encounter many logistical and social challenges while carrying out their duties. According to her, despite the challenges faced, she is able to keep at her job out of sheer passion. She adds, “Though it is said that our reward is in heaven, the mere fact that my efforts are being acknowledged is humbling and all together fulfilling; enabling me to do more in service for others and my country”.

8. Today, we call for greater commitment and investments to facilitate the implementation of more equitable distribution of midwives and also improve the environment for increased productivity, quality and reach of the services for the likes of Ms Addy. There is also the need for an adequate policy framework and better working conditions to ensure proper deployment and retention of well-trained midwives to save the lives of women and babies, whilst ensuring universal access to sexual reproductive health and rights for all.

9. Today, on the International Day of the Midwife, we stand in solidarity with midwives worldwide and thank you all for the life-saving work that you do. We at UNFPA, renew our commitment to working with global and national partners, the government and the people of Ghana to strengthen midwifery skills and capacities. We congratulate the Ministry of Health, the Ghana Health Service, the Midwifery Associations, this year's awardees and everyone involved in midwifery in Ghana, for the achievements chalked thus far, and particularly for today's commemoration.

We salute you Midwives - Defender of Women's Rights.

Thank You.