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**SOGC Policy Statement
Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Initiatives
in Low-resource Countries
June 6th, 2010**

SOGC's goal:
That every pregnancy is wanted, that every birth is safe
and that every newborn and child is healthy.

For over ten years, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) has been working with other Canadian and international organizations to promote better health for women and newborns worldwide. The SOGC welcomed the announcement of Prime Minister Stephen Harper on January 26th, 2010, to make maternal and child health the focus of the 2010 G8 Summit. The Society calls upon the government of Canada and other G8 countries to ensure a significant political commitment, including financial contribution, which will result in a global effort to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality in low-resource countries throughout the world. Although recent estimates have indicated a slight decrease in maternal mortality worldwide, many Sub-Saharan African countries have seen no progress in the reduction of maternal, newborn or child mortality, and some countries have experienced increased rates of mortality.

The main causes of maternal mortality are well known: postpartum hemorrhage, eclampsia, dystocia and sepsis. There is solid evidence-based research on how to treat these complications with low-cost life-saving interventions for women and children. However, in order to make real progress and save the lives of thousands of women and children, political leadership and financial commitment are essential.

The SOGC urges the Canadian government to assume a bold leadership role in the world to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to safe motherhood and newborn health and, more specifically, is directed toward the following three internationally recognized core strategies known to improve maternal and newborn health: access to quality care for pregnancy and childbirth, skilled attendance at birth and access to family planning.

More health-care professionals and community workers must be trained to respond to women's needs worldwide. Health facilities need to be better equipped with the resources and medications required to provide emergency obstetric care. In addition, more women require access to family planning methods. Underlying our efforts to reduce maternal and newborn mortality is the reproductive rights based approach for women. Canada must continue to advocate for women's rights worldwide.

Interventions are vital at all levels of care, from rural communities to urban centres; from family planning and pregnancy, to post-natal, newborn and child care. Using a continuum of care approach, we can make the important link between healthy mothers and healthy children.

The SOGC strongly urges CIDA to increase its funding towards cost-effective maternal, newborn, and child health programs, the strengthening of health systems, the training of health professionals, and ensuring adequate supplies of essential medications in order to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality/morbidity.

With a real commitment at the 2010 G8 Summit, Canada can lead governments and donors worldwide to commit resources that will result in significant improvements for the lives of women and children in low-resource countries that will save hundreds of thousands of lives each year and result in significant improvements.