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STATEMENT TO THE 44TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

**COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT: FERTILITY, REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

PRESENTED BY

CHRISTELLE CRONJE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: MOSAIC

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Chairperson and distinguished delegates,

I wish to thank the Chairperson and the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat for the excellent preparations and organisation of the 44th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development. Thank for the opportunity to deliver this statement. The statements already delivered provided substantial focus on the urgent need to achieve the shared targets.

By invitation of the International Women's Health Coalition and on behalf of MOSAIC, I wish to share our experiences and recommendations on Fertility, Reproductive Health and Development as developed jointly with our partners in the NGO community in South Africa.

We strongly support the Continental Policy Framework on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights as endorsed by the African Union Heads of State and the Maputo Plan of Action of 2006. This forms the core of our commitments in partnership with civil society and the South African Government in improving the lives of women and girls.

In February 2011 we marked the 15th anniversary of the choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996 and its amendments and what it meant for the women of South Africa. While considerable quantitative and qualitative progress has been noted towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals since 2000, gender inequality and unacceptably high maternal death rates still persists.

In addition, the prevailing levels of violence against women and sexual violence evident in our communities urge collective, integrated and immediate action to ensure universal access to healthcare, the exercising of sexual reproductive rights and women's re-integration into mainstream economic activities.

Chairperson,

I would like to note the progress made by South Africa towards achieving the goals that relate to Women and Girls' Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). However, medical abortion as a safe choice for women is still not freely and comfortably available.

Women often encounter obstacles to access abortion in Government hospitals, and do not have the option to choose between medical and surgical abortions. Illegal backstreet abortions are too often still the only option available. The demand for abortions from non-state providers is surging.

Chairperson, I respectfully submit our recommendations to you as follows:

- That it be understood and practised by all service providers that the only consent required by law in South Africa for the termination of pregnancy is the consent of the pregnant women
- That medical abortion be integrated into all Termination of Pregnancy services and the arrangement of provision of safe medical abortion as a choice within governments institutions;
- The investment in orientation and training of medical students, nursing staff and social workers to promote and implement medical abortion as an option in hospitals and clinics
- The provision of services for second trimester abortions
- The investment in and the provision of skilled counselling services on abortion at facility and community level – primary health care teams and in particular community health workers should receive training in all aspects of abortion.
- Increased investment in the education of all women on the choices and services available;
- The provision of generic medication at a lower costs to service providers to enable an increased meeting of demand (at an affordable cost)
- The urgent and concise action against the widespread marketing and increasingly visible operations of backstreet abortionists
- That the demographic detail of women seeking an abortion not influence the accessibility of the service
- That a women's HIV positive status not be considered when accessing or being referred for an abortion
- That the high prevalence of Violence against Women be eradicated
- That women's improved access to health services remain a priority in saving the lives of those who needs it most.

We note the substantial progress achieved in South Africa, but appeal for local and global improvement on Sexual Rights and Sexual Health Care Services.

Chairperson, Our call to you is for *improving sexual health rights and clinical service delivery to women and girls, decreasing the mortality rate due to failing or denied abortions, the eradication of violence and sexual violence against women and girls, and the recognition of the role of men as respectful partners in the healing process.*

Thank you