PRESS RELEASE

Addressing Gender Disparities and investing in Youth needed in Suriname as World Population Tops 7 Billion

Paramaribo, 9 November 2011—World population is 7 billion. How we respond now will determine whether we have a healthy, sustainable and prosperous future or one that is marked by inequalities, environmental decline and economic setbacks, according to The State of World Population 2011 report, published by the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA.

The report was launched today in Suriname at the National Archive by the Minister of Home Affairs, Soewarto Moestadja, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Suriname, Marcia de Castro. The ceremony counted with the participation of several institutions, both governmental and from the civil society. NGOs, community based organizations and members of the Youth Parliament were present at the launch which focused on some of Suriname’s challenges on the framework of the report.

The 7 billion milestone “is a challenge, an opportunity and a call to action,” said De Castro at the report’s launch. The State of World Population shows that the record population size can be viewed in many ways as a success for humanity because people are living longer and more children are surviving worldwide. However, the report shows that not everyone has benefited from this achievement or the higher quality of life that this implies. Great disparities exist among and within countries. Disparities in rights and opportunities also exist between men and women, girls and boys.

Gender Disparities
In order to safeguard sustained economic growth and to reduce poverty, equal rights and opportunities for males and females are necessary. In Suriname, girls perform better in almost all educational cycles. “However, despite their better school performances than boys, they still account for the largest part of the category of youth ‘unemployed and out of school’, explained De Castro. “Due to the persistent structural gender inequality in the labor market, young women have less access to jobs, even if they are higher educated than men. We are happy to learn that the ministry of Home Affairs is looking at strategies to eliminate the disparities caused by gender related issues.”

Young People
Of the world’s 7 billion, 1.8 billion are young people between the ages of 10 and 24. “Young people hold the key to the future, with the potential to transform the global political landscape and to propel economies through their creativity and capacities for innovation. But the opportunity to realize youth’s great potential must be seized now,” Dr. Osotimehin, head of UNFPA, said during the global launch of
the report last month. “We should be investing in the health and education of our youth. This would yield enormous returns in economic growth and development for generations to come”.

Like so many other countries, Suriname has a large generation of young people; around 55% of the population is under 30 years old. “Investing in young people, especially adolescent girls, is one of the smartest investments a country can make” pointed out De Castro at the launch. “Challenges faced by this group, stem from access to sexual reproductive health services, employment opportunities, safety and security and gender related issues.” In this regard, UNFPA is working in Suriname to include youth in the discussion on poverty reduction strategies.

**7 BILLION IS A CALL TO ACTION**

A world of seven billion has implications for sustainability, urbanization, access to health services and youth empowerment – however, it also offers a rare call-to-action opportunity to renew global commitment for a healthy and sustainable world.

As the United Nations agency responsible for marking this milestone, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is leading an innovative global campaign—7 Billion Actions—to build awareness around the opportunities and challenges of a world of seven billion people. UNFPA has enlisted a wide group of corporations, organizations, and individuals to deliver this unique initiative, using online, mobile and offline actions to tell the story of the people behind the number.

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