



Embassy of the United States

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

STATEMENT BY U.S. AMBASSADOR DONALD BOOTH

WELCOME RECEPTION - AFRICAN LEADERSHIP FOR CHILD SURVIVAL

January 16, 2013

I am delighted to be here with you all this evening and want to thank Minister Kesete and the Government of Ethiopia for hosting this meeting. I also want to commend former Minister of Health Dr. Tedros Adhanom for his initiative in raising this call to action for child survival across Africa. I salute the health ministers and their advisors here who day to day champion the fight to end preventable child deaths, the majority of which occur among newborns in the first year of life.

To all the participants here, I applaud your determination to renew and expand commitments for child survival in your respective countries. I have had the privilege of serving in many countries of this great continent and I have witnessed the progress made on child survival over the last two decades. Many of your countries will achieve Millennium Development Goal Four – reducing under 5 mortality by 2/3 by 2015. It is important to maintain the momentum. For this reason, in June of the past year, the U.S. Government joined with the Governments of India and our hosts here in Ethiopia, as well as UNICEF, to issue a Call to Action to ensure the survival of newborns and children under 5 around the world.

President Obama is committed to promoting the dignity of each and every human being and considers health and, specifically, child survival as an important component of human dignity. The President believes that every child in the world, no matter where she or he is born, deserves the opportunity to thrive. This is a fundamental aspiration that unites us despite religious, cultural, economic and social differences. And as the President laid out in his 2010 National Security Strategy, the United States has both a moral and a strategic interest in promoting health across the globe. Doing so not only aligns with our moral values but contributes to economic development and peace. Simply put, the health and security of your children is enhances the health security of all our children.

Economists have shown that improving child survival with investments in educating girls can change the demographics of countries and add as much as 2 percentage points to economic growth over a period of just a few years. Another important factor for child survival is maternal health and, therefore, maternal health is a centerpiece of our support to global health and child survival.

Denis McDonough, the Deputy National Security Advisor to the President, speaking at the June Call to Action stated that a country's infant mortality is an indirect but important indicator of a country's risk of instability. According to some estimates, high infant mortality rates suggest that a country is four to seven times more likely to experience instability. So protecting children is not only a moral obligation, it is how governments can better protect the welfare of all their citizens.

Preventable child deaths and child stunting rob a country of energy, creativity, and talent — they rob a country of its future. To invest in child survival is to invest in a country's future. And this is a virtuous circle: when families and communities see more children have a greater chance for survival, they will invest more in each of those children.

So on behalf of the American people, and on behalf of the U.S. government, I am here to express our support and enduring commitment to this simple but ambitious goal: to end preventable child deaths, to allow children to not only survive but also to thrive. As Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said in her keynote speech at the Call to Action: A Promise Renewed for Child Survival in Washington DC last June:

“We can only meet our ambitious goal if we keep up our efforts day after day and year after year, and if we are relentless about holding each other to the task.”

Thank you.