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STATEMENT FROM CECILE RICHARDS ON INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING IN THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION BUDGET

WASHINGTON, DC —The women of the world have true friends in Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the Obama administration. After years of inadequate funding during the previous administration, yesterday's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request for an increase in international family planning is a critical step forward in demonstrating our nation's renewed commitment to ensuring that women worldwide have access to safe and effective reproductive health care.

The Obama administration has sent a strong signal that the status quo is unacceptable. Every year more than half a million women — nearly all of whom live in developing countries — die of pregnancy-related causes. Moreover, one in three deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth could be avoided if women who wanted effective contraception had access to it.

To strengthen our working relationships with partners around the world, as well as our image, the United States must increase access to family planning. By ensuring that women have increased access to the family planning they need, our nation is working to make good on its commitment to promote the health of all women and their families.

An investment in family planning is an investment that reaps significant dividends. By providing education, counseling and contraceptives to women and couples, we are working to strengthen families worldwide. We also will help achieve major reductions in infant and maternal mortality, HIV infections and global poverty. As Secretary Clinton has said, "There's a direct connection between a woman's ability to plan her family, space her pregnancies, and give birth safely, and her ability to get an education, work outside the home, support her family, and participate fully in the life of her community."

Planned Parenthood works with partners across the globe to eliminate barriers to basic reproductive health care that is essential to the health and well-being of women, men and children everywhere. Limited access to health care, lack of political will, legal and regulatory restrictions, cultural taboos, and harsh gender inequality all put women at risk of unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and childbirth, and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The commitment of Secretary Clinton and the Obama administration to international family planning will further the efforts of Planned Parenthood and others to help women overcome barriers to accessing needed reproductive health care.

As the Fiscal Year 2011 budget and appropriations process moves forward, we look forward to working with Congress to build on this request so that we may adequately address the global health challenges facing women worldwide.

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Planned Parenthood Federation of America is the nation's leading sexual and reproductive health care provider and advocate. We believe that everyone has the right to choose when or whether to have a child, and that every child should be wanted and loved. Planned Parenthood affiliates operate more than 840 health centers nationwide, providing medical services and sexuality education for millions of women, men, and teenagers each year. We also work with allies worldwide to ensure that all women and men have the right and the means to meet their sexual and reproductive health care needs.