

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT UN POPULATION AWARDS CEREMONY**

New York, 26 June 2015

Your Excellency, Ambassador Edita Hrda, Chairperson of the Committee for the United Nations Population Award,  
Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA,  
Members of the Committee for the United Nations Population Award,  
Distinguished laureates,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

This ceremony is an opportunity to reconfirm our commitment to placing people at the centre of development.

It is a time to be inspired by excellence as we are by the award winners today.

And it is a chance to resolve to join forces for our common values.

More and more leaders understand that human rights and rule of law are the foundations for wellbeing, sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

Since the 1994 Cairo Conference, we have seen encouraging progress. Women have greater equality. People are living longer. Far more girls are in school. Far fewer families live in poverty.

Today's laureates are part of that success. And they are continuing to address the inequalities that persist.

These winners show how to translate commitments into results.

That is exactly what we need now.

The United Nations is marking our seventieth anniversary this year.

Our Organization stands for the collective pledge to create a better life for all, a life in peace, development and respect of human rights.

The Millennium Development Goals were historic in their scope and their success.

Now we are preparing a sustainable development agenda that will be even more ambitious.

We will need champions like today's honourees to stand strong for our beliefs and work hard for meaningful results.

Our two laureates have indeed blazed a trail in improving lives and achieving sustainable development.

One of them is a living legend in our United Nations family.

I am delighted to congratulate Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, former Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

She is also one of the first women in the Saudi Arabian Parliament.

For more than 30 years, Thoraya Obaid has stood for women's human rights.

We were fortunate to have her serve as Executive Director of UNFPA from 2001 to 2010. Her tenure was marked by promoting development through a culturally sensitive approach, leveraging the positive force of local cultural values and religious beliefs to support universally agreed international human rights.

I am especially impressed by Thoraya Obaid's engagement with young people. As Executive Director, she invited them to contribute to UNFPA's work around the world. She helped them to develop their capacities as citizens with rights and responsibilities.

We honour her strong defence of human rights, her compassion and her unwavering commitment to improve lives around the world.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am also delighted to congratulate this year's institutional laureate, the African Population and Health Research Center, based in Kenya.

This African-based and African-run non-governmental organization successfully connects policies and programmes to social science research.

It has brought together African scholars who conduct research on population dynamics, health and education and more.

The Center has also worked with partners in Africa and beyond on innovative research programmes that address population and health challenges. And it has been ranked as one of the 15 leading think tanks worldwide on health policy.

The United Nations Population Award celebrates outstanding contributions to the awareness of population issues or their solutions. Our 2015 laureates deserve this recognition and our gratitude for their contributions.

Please join me in a round of applause to congratulate Ms. Obaid for her exceptional leadership, and the African Population and Health Research Center for its exemplary commitment to applied population research in order to achieve lives of dignity for all.

Thank you.