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African Leadership for Child Survival- A Promise Renewed

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Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Video Transcript

Hello. I wish I could be with you in Addis Ababa at the African Leadership on Child Survival meeting.

As you know, last year in Washington, the Government of Ethiopia joined with India, the United States, and UNICEF to host a Call to Action on Child Survival.

More than 160 governments—including my own—signed a pledge to end preventable child death. Two hundred civil society organizations pledged their support, and 220 faith-based organizations committed to promoting the 10 best practice healthy behaviors that will help save more women and more children from unnecessarily dying.

This movement is unique because you have all worked to colead it, to create a single coalition that allows us the opportunity to be successful around the world. We've been able to learn from each other as peers so that together, we can advance what Secretary Clinton has said would be one of the greatest things people have ever done for one another.

By taking the pledge, each government and organization is committing resources and integrating child survival as a key element of their global strategy.

Together, we established a road map that would help us reach our goal. We committed to carefully measure and report on our results. We committed to focus on low cost interventions with high impact, particularly for vulnerable populations. We will ensure that our efforts address the basic causes of mortality, which may vary from country to country. And we will leverage technology to bring our results to scale faster and more effectively than ever before.

Your leadership and dedicated focus is an essential part of this unified effort. It is wonderful to see so many countries gathered together in Ethiopia to focus on how to sharpen national plans and develop scorecards to strengthen monitoring and reporting.

I want to thank Minister of Health Tedros, who committed at the time of the Call to Action to convene a meeting of African leaders to help accelerate reductions in child mortality. His extraordinary leadership has elevated the issue of child survival on the continent and across the world, and we look forward to continuing his good work in partnership with Minister Kesete, as he takes the lead on this incredibly important effort.

In the last two decades, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a 39 percent decline in the under-five mortality rate, a tremendous achievement that has been called the “the best story in development.” But despite this progress, we know that some countries are doing better than others and too many children perish unnecessarily every day.

By joining together to share best practices and create a strong network, I am confident that we can add to our momentum and save more lives.

I hope the next couple of days are productive and offer you the opportunity to find new and creative ways to ensure that every child lives to celebrate their 5th birthday. Most importantly, the work you are doing will continue when you return to your capital cities—and USAID and the United States government stands ready to support you in your efforts.

As President Obama recently shared when speaking to the nation about the tragic loss of young lives in Newtown, Connecticut, he noted, "This is our first task: caring for our children. It's our first job. If we don't get that right, we don't get anything right. That's how, as a society, we will be judged."

If we act now, we will not only create a more prosperous and peaceful world. We will secure one of the greatest moral victories of our time.

Thank you for your leadership.