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Asia and Oceania Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology

POSITION STATEMENT ON PREVENTING UNSAFE ABORTIONS

The Tokyo Declaration

Adopted at the XXth AOCOG, 21-25 September 2007, Tokyo, Japan

Background

More than 90 million *abortions* and 198,000 *maternal abortion deaths* were reported in the 23 AOFOG member countries over a period of five years from 1995 to 2000.⁽¹⁾

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an unsafe abortion as "a procedure for terminating an unwanted pregnancy either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical standards, or both," and notes that *almost all abortion-related deaths are preventable and that when abortion is performed by qualified people using correct techniques in sanitary conditions, it is one of the safest medical procedures.*⁽²⁾

In the year 2000, there were 10.5 million estimated *unsafe abortions* in Asia, which is more than half of the 19 million estimated unsafe abortions occurring globally.⁽³⁾

More than 50% of all *maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion* globally, occur in the region⁽³⁾, and such deaths and injuries disproportionately affect adolescents, poor women, and other socially at-risk groups of women.

To achieve The U.N. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 on maternal health the issue of unsafe abortion must be addressed.⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾

Numerous inter-governmental conferences and human rights conventions have acknowledged the rights of women to personal autonomy and to have access to health care, including the right to make personal decisions about whether and when to have children.⁽⁷⁻¹³⁾

Several U.N. conferences / documents including the ICPD 1994, and the ICPD +5 recognize women's sexual and reproductive rights, have expressed commitments to address unsafe abortion, and have urged governments to ensure that women have access to high quality reproductive health services, including assuring that safe abortion services are available where legally permitted.^(4, 7-19)

The laws in *all* AOFOG member countries *permit abortion on some grounds*, whether to save a woman's life, to preserve her physical or mental health, in cases of rape and incest, for socio-economic reasons, or on request.⁽²⁰⁾

