

## U.N. goals must omit abortion

BY CHRIS SMITH

An army of health activists and world leaders will gather at the United Nations this week to review the eight Millennium Development Goals agreed to at the start of the century and to recalibrate and recommit to more effectively achieve them by 2015. The overarching and noble goal is reducing global poverty. But the most compelling and achievable objectives — huge reductions in maternal and child mortality worldwide — will be severely undermined if the Obama administration either directly or covertly integrates abortion into the final outcome document.

If the summit is sidetracked by abortion activists, the robust resolve required at national levels to deploy the funds needed to achieve the internationally agreed targets will be compromised. The risk is real. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said publicly that she believes access to abortion is part of maternal and reproductive health, thinking that runs contrary to the understanding of the more than 125 U.N. member states that prohibit or otherwise restrict abortion in their sovereign laws and constitutions. Moreover, speaking before the House International Relations Committee in 2005, Mark Malloch Brown, chief of staff for then-Secretary General Kofi Annan, said concerning reproductive health, “we do not interpret it as including abortion.” Clinton also calls pro-abortion nongovernmental organizations “partners.”

At the Group of Eight meetings in Canada this year, Prime Minister Stephen Harper rebuffed Clinton's attempt to integrate abortion with initiatives to reduce maternal mortality. He stated his opposition to funding abortions by saying: “We want to make sure our funds are used to save the lives of women and children and are used on the many things that are available to us, and, frankly, do not divide the Canadian population.”

Millennium Development Goal No. 4 is reducing child mortality rates two-thirds from 1990 levels. It is clear that myriad cost-effective interventions need to be expanded to save children's lives. These include treatment and prevention of disease, as well as greater access to adequate food and nutrition, clean water, childhood vaccinations, oral rehydration packets, antibiotics, and drugs to inhibit mother-to-child HIV transmission.

Similarly, unborn children desperately need care to optimize their health before and after birth. Healthy children start in the womb.

Abortion is, by definition, infant mortality, and it undermines the achievement of the fourth Millennium Development Goal. There is nothing benign or compassionate about procedures that dismember, poison, induce premature labor or starve a child to death. Indeed, the misleading term “safe abortion” misses the point that no abortion — legal or illegal — is safe for the child and that all are fraught with negative health consequences, including emotional and psychological damage, for the mother.

Talk of “unwanted children” reduces children to mere objects, without inherent human dignity and whose worth depends on their perceived utility or how much they're wanted. One merely has to look at the scourge of human trafficking and the exploitation of children for forced labor or child soldiering to see where such disregard for the value of life leads.

The long-neglected health of mothers is prioritized by Millennium Development Goal No. 5, which rallies the world to cut maternal mortality rates 75 percent from 1990 levels.

We have known for more than 60 years what actually saves women's lives: skilled attendance at birth, treatment to stop hemorrhages, access to safe blood, emergency obstetric care, antibiotics, repair of fistulas, adequate nutrition, and pre- and post-natal care. The goal of the upcoming summit should be a world free of abortion, not free abortion to the world.

A recent landmark study funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and published in the British journal the *Lancet* in April is a great encouragement to governments that have been seriously addressing maternal mortality in their countries. The study, confirmed by similar numbers in a World Health Organization report released just this month, shows progress in the fight against maternal mortality; the number of maternal deaths per year as of 2008 has been reduced to 342,900 — or 281,500 in the absence of HIV deaths — some 40 percent lower than in 1980. And contrary to prevailing myths, the study underscored that many nations that have laws prohibiting abortion also have some of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world — Ireland, Chile and Poland among them.

Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals will cost tens of billions of dollars. Credible polls from CNN and Gallup show that huge majorities of Americans don't want their tax dollars used to pay for abortions.

Including abortion in the U.N. Outcome Document or in its implementation will undermine the Millennium Development Goals. Actions and programs to achieve the latter must embrace all of the world's citizens, especially the weakest and most vulnerable. We must affirm, respect and tangibly assist the precious lives of women and all children, including the unborn.

The writer, a Republican from New Jersey, is the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Africa and global health.