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**CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH KEYNOTE
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Thank you for this opportunity to address you this morning.

It is an honor to share with you all an issue that is very close to my heart. I come here today not just as the Administrator of the U.S. EPA – but also as the mother of two bright, healthy young boys. My focus as a mother is their future. Just as our collective focus must be the health and welfare of future generations – all over the globe.

Each day, I am reminded of that solemn oath we as environmental leaders have made to our children, which is why I'm so encouraged to see children's environmental health back on the G8 agenda. I thank our Italian hosts and Japanese counterparts for their continued interest in promoting children's health in the G8 forum. I also salute Minister Saito for his detailed and comprehensive presentation this morning.

The G8 has a record of bringing attention to children's environmental health issues, and our interest here today is to maintain and advance that record. We must also acknowledge that these issues are no less critical now than 12 years ago. Indeed, they are more critical.

In 1997, this group acknowledged that children throughout the world face threats to health. We agreed to establish national policies to take into account specific exposure pathways and dose-response characteristics of children in our risk assessments and our standard setting practices.

The 1997 Declaration also cited the threat to childhood survival from lack of access to clean water, and the particular importance of clean air to infants and children both indoors and out of doors.

We further identified chemicals that have adverse health effects for children, including hormone disruption or neurological damage.

And finally, the G8 called for action on climate change in light of the threat to our children and future generations.

In the last 12 years we have learned much more about the ways in which environmental exposures uniquely affect children. With that increased knowledge, our sense of urgency for further action on children has also increased.

Many of the countries in this room today have made significant strides in children's health protection. Many international organizations and NGOs have made progress as well. We can all benefit from this collective experience. Let me mention a few of the many noteworthy developments:

- birth cohort research studies in Japan, Italy, the UK, Australia, Norway, Denmark, France, Israel, China, Canada and Spain,
- partnerships on global, regional and country-specific children's health indicators, as encouraged by the G8 in Canada and further developed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa in 2002,

- also, we've seen creation of materials to train health care providers on environmental precipitants of disease in developing countries,
- we've seen the creation of pediatric environmental health units to prevent, diagnose, manage and treat environmentally related illnesses in children,
- we've seen a new chemicals policy in Europe,
- we've seen WHO Europe's Children's Environment and Health Action Plan,
- My friends, the list goes on.

However, it is clear that this list is incomplete – and that underscores a critical point: We need an assessment of practices that are successful in protecting the health of children so that we may assist each other and countries in the developing world.

We must braid together the strands of our collective efforts – to create a strong fiber that protects future generations.

Under Canada's leadership, this group last addressed children's environmental health in 2002, and I understand that most countries here today, not just G8 countries, have done significant work in research, data collection, policy and outreach over the past years.

I also understand that our NGOs and international organizations have been addressing children's environmental health issues. We must illuminate this critical work, in order to mutually maximize the benefits of these efforts.

To all of you in this room, I say this: You are not alone in your efforts to protect children's environmental health. The U.S. government, under this new administration, will keep faith with the promise we've made to future generations.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is working in many ways to confront the environmental challenges our children face.

Some examples of EPA's efforts include work to:

- expand children's environmental health research
- develop indicators on children's environmental health
- establish environmental policies that consider the well-being and unique vulnerabilities of children
- expand educational efforts in partnership with health professionals to identify, prevent, and reduce environmental health threats to children
- and, communicate information on children's environmental health to the public

We know that children are physiologically different from adults;

We know that children also have higher levels of exposure than adults;

We also know that children:

- have more rapid growth rates than adults,
- have rapid breathing rates, taking in more air in proportion to their body size than adults
- they have higher rates of food and liquid intake than adults
- can have higher environmental exposures than adults as a result of high hand to mouth behavior

- they have unique exposure pathways such as breast milk, that can yield high exposures to some environmental contaminants early in life.

We know these facts because of painstaking research conducted over the years. However, it is important to know more. To expand our knowledge of children's health, EPA this year started the most ambitious study of children's health ever conducted in the United States.

- Planning for the National Children's Study (NCS) began in 2000, and the Study was launched in January of this year. We will examine the effects of environmental influences on the health and development of a nationally representative sample of 100,000 children.
- We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with similar studies under way elsewhere in the world in order to better understand and prevent rare childhood conditions, such as cancer.

Interest in children's health since the mid-1990s has ushered in legislation and Presidential-level initiatives designed to strengthen the protections for children's health.

For example, EPA is responding to a call from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences to increase environmental health education among physicians and nurses.

EPA and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have established a network of pediatric environmental health expertise.

These Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units bring together pediatricians, who understand children, with occupational doctors, nurses, toxicologists and other specialties to create an expertise on children's environmental health.

We know that other countries have begun similar centers of expertise, and we are pleased that the pediatric unit model in North America, including Mexico and Canada, might be expandable globally.

Our challenge today is to learn from each other so that we may realize the promise and potential of our future generations.

So, let's together continue this forward moving work. In particular, let us:

- Collaborate on research
- Learn from our past efforts to inform our future work, and in particular eliminate lead exposure, create sensible chemicals policies, reduce exposure to smoke from cookstoves, and highlight the importance of clean water and sanitation.
- Pay attention to the health effects of children in our climate change solutions
- Educate health care providers so they can prevent, identify, manage and treat environmentally related illness in children, through models that include the Pediatric Units in North America.

I hope that we can continue the work we started in 1997, renewing our commitment to protect our children from environmental health threats where they live, learn, work and play.

To our partners in the developing world, please know that the U.S. government stands ready to work with you. Developing countries face the traditional or legacy challenges of water and sanitation provision as well as new threats from endocrine disrupters, chemical use, and climate change.

There is much to do. Our children's future is so bright. But we must work in earnest to ensure that their bright future is not overcast by the clouds of pollution, climate change and other environmental degradation. The United States is committed to working with you to prevent that from occurring.

Thank you.

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