HOME BIRTH

BACKGROUND
Childbirth is a social and emotional event and is an essential part of family life. The care given should take into consideration the individual woman’s cultural and social needs. There is a consequent need and demand for care that is close to where and how people live, close to their birthing culture, and at the same time safe. The World Health Report 2005 states that ‘There is a value in the rituals surrounding birth, and in keeping these as a central feature of family life. The setting for birth may therefore be the woman’s home, a local health facility or, if medical or surgical care is likely to be needed, a hospital. Furthermore a recent (2010) the European court judgement declared that the choice of home birth is a European human right.

POSITION
The International Confederation of Midwives believes that a woman has the right to a home birth as a valid and safe option. The ICM supports the right of women to make an informed decision to give birth at home supported by a midwife. The midwife who provides professional services for women in their homes should be able to do so within a nation’s health system and access to insurance and appropriate compensation. The ICM regrets that not all nations have the legislation or health systems which support planned home birth, and urges national governments to review the scientific literature and work towards a maternity care system which includes this option.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Member Associations based in countries where women do not have access to a full range of options as to where they can safely give birth, are encouraged to negotiate with their governments to develop health policies for this to occur. Member associations in countries with developed systems are encouraged to work with women and other stakeholders to develop and protect the home birth option.
Member Associations are strongly recommended to strengthen the capacity and skill of their members to provide home birth as a service.

RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS
UNFPA/ICM. 2008. Investing in Midwives and others with Midwifery Skills.

Adopted at Brisbane International Council meeting, 2005
Revised and adopted at Durban International Council meeting, 2011
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