



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



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Media Statement

For Immediate Release

NEW YORK, Thursday, May 17, 2012 – A United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General has urged African nations to locally mobilise resources for HIV treatment and strategise on manufacturing drugs within the continent. Briefing African diplomats accredited to the UN at the African Union (AU) offices in New York on the topic: 'recent developments in the AIDS response with a focus on the impact of the financial crisis and Africa's dependence on external funding', UNAIDS executive director Michel Sidibé said the continent had in the last 10 years made impressive progress in combating HIV/AIDS.

Mr Sidibé, a Malian national, urged Africans to sustain the gains made so far.

However, he noted that between 80 and 90 per cent, and in some countries 100 per cent, of people on HIV treatment relied on external resources mostly coming from the Global Fund and US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

"This is a major challenge for us," he said.

"I want your help [as ambassadors]. We want to organise a side event with African Presidents during the next UN General Assembly to start the discussion about the ownership of how we can have a new approach of financing global health by making Africa drive this discussion."

Mr Sidibé expressed concern that almost 25 to 30 per cent of the medicines on the market nowadays were counterfeit. He further explained that between 90 and 95 per cent of medicines consumed in Africa were manufactured abroad particularly in Asia. "But we now need to start thinking about manufacturing medicines in Africa," Mr Sidibé said. "I have been privileged to address the [New Partnership for Africa's Development] NEPAD heads of state and they asked us to come up with the road map on sustainable financing and mobilizing additional resources internally in Africa for drugs and treatment."

Mr Sidibé said most African countries had already increased their domestic budgetary allocation to HIV/AIDS, reduced prices of medicines and increased the number of recipients of drugs.

"We know that we managed to change the trajectory of this epidemic on the continent but we still have 9 million people today waiting for treatment," the UNAIDS chief said. "The problem we will be facing soon is that most of our people are on first line treatment, which means they are relying on treatment which is not used in the rest of the world. We need to be ready with our 6 million people who are on treatment moving from first line to second line or even third line treatment but it means you have to multiply the cost of treatment by almost 10 [times]."

According to Mr Sidibé, almost 1.8 million people die from HIV/AIDS in Africa annually.

He said AIDS was "still an emergency issue" in Africa.

"We need to continue to push to make sure that access to treatment is a reality for our continent," said Mr Sidibé, adding that science had shown that putting people on HIV treatment early reduces infection by 96 percent meaning that "early treatment is more efficient than condoms". He explained that almost 400, 000 babies were born with HIV in Africa and "we can stop that".

"We need to make sure that we don't have babies born with HIV," said Mr Sidibé.

African diplomats pledged their support to combat HIV/AIDS and their Governments' commitment to mobilise local resources.

Issued by:

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