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African Union

and

**Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS,
Office of the President and Cabinet**

Statement

By

H.E. Dr. Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba
Commissioner for Economic Affairs
African Union Commission

At the

Event on Advocacy on HIV/AIDS 2009/2010

AU-SARO

Lilongwe, Malawi

31 December 2009

Hon. Prof. Etta Banda, M. P., Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Malawi

Hon. Prof. Moses Chirambo. M.P., Minister of Health of Health and Population of the Republic of Malawi

H.E. Ms T.S. Dumbutshena, Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Malawi and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Prof. R. Omotayo Olaniyan , African Union Representative to Southern Africa

Representatives of Intergovernmental Organizations

Members of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted this morning to attend this important event on advocacy to address one of the important challenges to mankind in our time, namely, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As we might all be aware, the pandemic has confronted the international community in the last two decades. And despite that it has resulted in high fatalities, loss of manpower and erosion of economic growth, the international community is yet to find adequate solutions to combating it.

Please allow me at the outset to convey the warm and fraternal greetings from H. E. Jean Ping, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. I also wish to re-affirm the commitment of the African Union to the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It will be recalled that the United Nations Secretary General, UNAIDS and World AIDS Day Campaigners in June this year launched the global campaign under the theme “Universal Access and Human Rights” with the objective of overcoming the difficulties posed by these two issues, Universal Access and Human Rights, in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In the context of this theme, universal access, *inter alia*, implies access to medicines and health commodities through the strengthening or promotion of local and regional production of generics and increased use of traditional medicine. It also implies access to medicines at affordable prices and that health services reach all communities, particularly the most vulnerable and those at the highest risk.

The inclusion of human rights in the theme underscores its critical role in the fight against the pandemic. Discrimination, denial, stigma and marginalization are some of the unacceptable issues related to human rights. These issues, as we might all be aware, have proved elusive in our fight against HIV/AIDS. These issues should, therefore, be satisfactorily addressed at both national and regional levels through the establishment of appropriate institutions. In addition, appropriate laws should be developed and applied to protect the rights of individuals affected by the pandemic.

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

The African Union is devoted to the fight against HIV/AIDS in the continent. In this regard, it continues, among other things, to play a leadership role in coordinating and harmonizing HIV/AIDS strategies and policies in Africa. The leadership of the AU in this fight is well known. It was first illustrated through the landmark Abuja Declaration and Framework for Action on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases adopted by African Union Heads of State and Government in 2001.

Further in May 2006, the Special Summit of African Union Heads of State and Government held in Abuja, Nigeria, adopted the Framework for Harmonization of Approaches among African Union Member States and integration of Policies on Human Rights and People infected by HIV/AIDS. Also at the same Summit, the Heads of State and Government recommended six actions to overcome obstacles impeding universal access to human rights and gender equality. This was to ensure that the issue remains high on the development agenda of African countries.

It will also be recalled that an earlier meeting in Brazzaville committed African countries to “Scaling up Towards Universal Access to HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support by 2010.” With the target date of 2010, the African Union enjoined Member States to take appropriate actions for the implementation of these declarations at the national level.

I need to mention that the African Union has worked in close collaboration with various partners, including the United Nations agencies, funds and programs such as UNAIDS, WHO and UNICEF in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, please allow me to commend His Excellency Ngwazi Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi; the Government and the People of Malawi for the remarkable progress that has been made in halting the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In this connection, please permit me also to congratulate the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS in the Office of the President and Cabinet for working tirelessly in the fight against the pandemic. Notably, the work of the Department has been adequately harmonized with that of the National Aids Commission (NAC) in order to achieve this positive outcome. This, I believe, is partly the result of effective internationalization and implementation of regional, continental and international declarations.

However, Malawi, like many other countries in our continent is yet to come out of the woods in the menace of HIV/AIDS. There is in need for more actions on implementation of adopted regional, continental and international recommendations. On the other hand, the campaign on “Universal Access and Human Rights” is demanding institutionally, legally, socially, culturally, as well as financially. Besides, there are still many

unresolved issues in the areas of prevention, treatment, care and support across the country.

We at the African Union Commission believe that the progress made so far by the Government of Malawi should not only be sustained but also improved upon through additional and timely financial and technical support. This is why the African Union has decided to support the Government of Malawi in its HIV/AIDS 2009/2010 campaign through the provision of a special grant of US \$15,000.00, equivalent to around K2.16 million. The grant is being made through the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS in the Office of the President and Cabinet in support of its campaign on Universal Access and Human Rights.

The AU welcomes the support that has been accorded to the Department by other partners, including the United Nations agencies, funds and programs and The Global Fund. The African Union encourages them to continue to do so at this critical time. The more support is given the better the chances are for a better campaign.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish each and every one of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

2009

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