

AFRICAN UNION

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ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION

Fifteenth Ordinary Session

25 - 27 July 2010

Kampala, Uganda

Assembly/AU/17(XV) Add.1

Original: French

**A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE ELIMINATION OF MOTHER-CHILD
TRANSMISSION OF HIV IN AFRICA**

(Item Proposed by the Republic of Senegal)

2010
MAKE PEACE HAPPEN

**A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
MOTHER-CHILD TRANSMISSION OF HIV IN AFRICA**
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1. AIDS still represents a major challenge in sub-Saharan Africa with 67% of the overall population living with HIV/AIDS according to the 2009 UNAIDS/WHO Report. The situation is all the more worrying as far as children are concerned. According to the Report, 430,000 children were infected by AIDS worldwide, 390,000 of whom were in sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 90% of the overall paediatric epidemic prevalence.

2. In Africa, paediatric HIV/AIDS is still of major concern whereas it is now a thing of the past in many European countries. Although progress has been made in our countries, particularly in terms of preventive care and treatment of expectant mothers infected by HIV, there is still a long way to go.

3. Though one of those countries with low HIV prevalence (0.7% of the overall population), Senegal is nevertheless worried and concerned about AIDS-related maternal and infant mortality. It is important to note not only the feminisation of the epidemic but also the disparity among regions and vulnerable groups; reason for which the Government of Senegal is fully committed to the total elimination of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) so that no child is born with HIV.

4. PMTCT is a set of simple targeted procedures which work in synergy to reduce the risk of the child being infected with HIV/AIDS. Indeed, thanks to PMTCT, it is possible to reduce considerably the number of children born with HIV, as has been the case in other regions of the world, and to pave the way for an HIV-free generation. Strengthening PMTCT programmes will also help enhance maternal and child health.

5. HIV/AIDS is the primary cause of mortality throughout the world, among women of childbearing age. Nearly 16 million women aged over 15 are living with HIV while nearly 850,000 women die of HIV/AIDS related causes every year. Today, nearly 1 in 5 maternal deaths is linked to HIV, according to recent data. Whereas maternal mortality was declining steadily in other regions of the world, it was on the rise in most African countries until ARV drugs became more widely available in the past few years.

6. The burden of preventable deaths and diseases is heaviest among the most vulnerable populations, that is, far too often women and children in the poorest countries. The United Nations Secretary-General called upon all nations to pay particular and concerted attention to mother and child health, and apply their know-how to save millions of lives each year.

7. It is a welcome development that the African Union is making HIV a priority, particularly PMTCT, during this Summit. Progress in mother and child health in Africa

and progress in the health of the populations of Africa in general are very much predicated on the progress achieved in the response to AIDS. It is necessary to ensure that mothers receive the treatment they need to remain alive and in good health. But this can only be done if the women – and their partners – are able to access HIV testing and counselling.

8. Yet, scientific data indicate that in sub-Saharan African countries, only 25% of expectant mothers have access to HIV testing and counselling. Without this service, women cannot know their serological status and cannot take the measures required to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission to their children. Furthermore, data show that even after having taken the test, most of the HIV-positive women do not receive the treatment they need to combat the disease.

9. We must work together to boost our efforts at preventing HIV transmission from the mother to her child, and the first step in this direction is to prevent future mothers from being infected by HIV. It is just as necessary to step up efforts to ensure that children are provided with treatment and support. Many deaths on the part of infected children can be curtailed if they are treated on time. By so doing, one will be able to save the lives of mothers and babies and, thus, at the same time make progress as far as MDGs 4, 5 and 6 are concerned.

10. This involves strengthening the dispensaries, health centres and hospitals and ensuring that the personnel and drugs needed to provide care and support to mothers and children are available.

11. The Continent's Leaders are under the obligation to lead the fight to totally eliminate HIV transmission from mother to child. This will require the strengthening of their political commitment, extensive mobilisation of resources and concerted implementation of relevant measures.

12. To achieve this, one would need to draw on previous commitments, particularly the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Maputo Plan of Action and the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA). This is indeed a crucial opportunity for action – there remains five more years before the end of the Millennium Development Goals timeline, when the International Community will come together to evaluate the progress accomplished.

13. As it was agreed to extend the Abuja Call to 2015 to make it coincide with the MDG targets, Senegal invites all Member States of the African Union, as stipulated in the Abuja Progress Report, to effectively intensify their efforts in terms of antiretroviral therapy and prevention of mother-to-child transmission so as to extend health, treatment and care services to all primary health care centres as the first step towards prevention, care and treatment, while aiming to eliminate paediatric HIV and keeping sero-positive mothers alive.

14. Senegal strongly believes that through this action, we shall be able in the nearest possible future, to affirm that thanks to the collective action of all the concerned African role players, HIV transmission from mother to child will become a distant memory in our continent.

“We are determined to deal once and for all with the scourge of conflicts and violence on our continent, acknowledging our shortcomings and errors, committing our resources and our best people, and missing no opportunity to push forward the agenda of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. We, as leaders, simply cannot bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans.” (Paragraph 9 of the Tripoli Declaration of 31 August 2009).

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