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AIDS THREATENS AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT, AMOAKO WARNS

Addis Ababa, 23 March 2004 (ECA) - The Chairman of the Commission for HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA), Dr K.Y. Amoako, has opened the Second Meeting of the Commission in Maputo, Mozambique with a warning to Africa's governments that HIV/AIDS "poses the greatest threat to sustained economic development in Africa."

"We have repeatedly stated that we are an activist Commission. It is time to go out and drive this message home to our governments and to those who can help us get it across," he told the meeting.

Both Patrons of CHGA, H.E. Kenneth Kaunda, former president of Zambia, and H.E. Pascoal Mocumbi, former prime minister of Mozambique, are attending the meeting, along with other commissioners.

Also present at the opening session was the Prime Minister of Mozambique, Luisa Dias Diogu, and other government officials. Other participants include UN partner agencies, civil society organizations and research partners.

Amoako said that while it was vital to focus on immediate challenges they could distract policy makers from the equally pressing demand – the need to plan for the long term.

By incapacitating and then killing so many people, AIDS was destroying Africa's human capital, he said, - their life experiences, skills, and knowledge built up over many years.

"The loss of so many people in the prime of their lives represents a devastating blow to a nation's capacity to develop," he said.

Three of the sectors likely to be worst affected were education, public services and the security forces: CHGA aimed to provide governments with sound data, cogent analysis and first-rate advice on formulating policy and implementing it.

CHGA will describe plans for country studies in Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Senegal and Democratic Republic of Congo. Research will focus on the impact of HIV/AIDS on macroeconomic and political governance structures, and identify best practices and transferable knowledge relevant for other countries on the continent.

"We aim to press home to our leaders and decision makers the message that HIV threatens their capacity to govern and to help them fight back," Amoako said.

KY Amoako welcomed three new members to the Commission: Seyyid Abdulai, outgoing director-general of the OPEC Fund, journalist Madeleine Mukamabano and Brazilian Aids campaigner, Paulo Teixeira.

Commissioners Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi, Mary Chinery-Hesse, Alan Whiteside, Milly Katana and Haile Debas were among others present.

(END)

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The full text of Mr. Amoako's address to the meeting is available . It will be posted shortly after delivery in the 'What's New' Section of the ECA Web site, at www.uneca.org

Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
