

1,500 CONVERGE ON ADDIS ABABA FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2000

Addis Ababa, 02 December 2000 (ECA) - More than 1,500 delegates are converging on Addis Ababa this weekend to attend the African Development Forum 2000 (ADF 2000) which is place at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) from 3 - 7 December 2000 under the theme 'AIDS - The Greatest Leadership Challenge'.

Organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in conjunction with UNAIDS and its seven co-sponsors, UNDP, UNICEF, The World Bank and other partners, ADF 2000 has been designed to serve as a launching pad for a renewed commitment to more concerted action against HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Its overarching objective is to generate the highest level of scientific, technological, traditional and intellectual leadership commitment possible, at all levels of society and the development community, towards addressing the pandemic and mitigating the devastating impact it has already registered on the continent.

Some 1,500 African leaders and policy makers, civil society organisations (including people living with HIV/AIDS and academia), young people, private sector and development partner representatives will seek to address concrete roles and responsibilities for leaders at all levels so as to galvanize an African-led response to the pandemic.

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, will be among dignitaries attending the Forum. Also scheduled to attend the Forum are Presidents Festus Mogae of Botswana, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda. Senegal's Prime Minister, Moustapha Niasse, and Malawi's Vice President, Justin Malewezi, will also attend. Prime Minister Nagoum Yomassoum of Chad arrived in Addis Ababa yesterday.

The programme of work consists of pre-Forum meetings, plenary sessions and additional special sessions where participants will meet with experts, participate in roundtables, debates, benefit from skills-building workshops and discuss the main theme, issues and background papers. The core element of ADF 2000 is analysis of leadership roles in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Events kick off today with pre-forum meetings to clarify roles and priority issues and to prepare for the main Forum -- which opens on the afternoon of Sunday, 3 December with statements from former South African President Nelson Mandela, Ethiopian President Negasso Gidada, a young person living with HIV/AIDS, and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salim. The pre-forum meetings are on Youth (UNICE/ECA), Civil Society (UNICEF/ECA), Leadership roles in access to care in Africa (WHO), and HIV/AIDS and the world of work (ILO).

A highlight of the week will be a Forum of Heads of State on the morning of Thursday 7 December, to be kicked off by a keynote address by the UN Secretary General. At this Forum, Heads of State will each deliver statements sharing their unique perspectives in their respective battles against HIV/AIDS. They will engage interactively in a dialogue with representatives from different constituencies that include leaders from the private sector, development partner agencies, and from civil society, mainly NGOs, the media, academia, and religious institutions. The interaction is expected to promote local, national, subregional and international partnerships.

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- More background on ADF 2000 is appended below.
- For all the latest ADF 2000 documents, including the programme, theme papers and background documents, please visit the ADF website at <http://www.uneca.org/adf2000> and click on 'Daily Update'.
- The site will be updated regularly with statements, press releases, summaries and other relevant information. It will also include links to a multimedia archive featuring video and audio highlights of the Forum.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM (ADF)

The African Development Forum (ADF) is a unique, innovative, annual initiative led by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to bring together government, civil society, private sector and development partners to focus specific strategies policies and programmes on a selected development issue in Africa and establish an African-driven response. ADF is action and outcome oriented, radically shifting from the theoretical, paper-driven approach of most conferences. The ADF strategy stresses the participation of all stakeholders and actors, interactive dialogue and deliberations to share experiences and best practices, formulate policies and action plans, and build co-operation and partnership at all levels.

The plenary sessions, focus groups, breakout sessions, poster sessions, exhibitions, and panel discussions are designed to foster an optimal level of interaction. Multimedia tools and techniques, including Internet discussions, are used to broaden dialogue as well as strengthen country level participation and follow-up actions. The ADF 2000 is enhanced by live broadcasting and online discussions. Theatre, music and celebrity goodwill appearances that support the conference theme are also part of the ADF impact.

The first ADF was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 24-28 October 1999, on the theme, "The Challenge to Africa of Globalization and the Information Age." In line with the Forum's mission of addressing the continent's most pressing development issues, this year's chosen theme is "AIDS: the Greatest Leadership Challenge". ADF 2000 takes place from 3 -7 December 2000, convened and hosted by ECA, in partnership with UNAIDS, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as co-sponsors, and with the human technical and financial assistance of various United Nations agencies and bilateral and multilateral institutions.

WHY HIV/AIDS FOR ADF 2000?

The AIDS pandemic is undermining social and economic structures and reversing the fragile gains made since independence. In parts of Africa, AIDS is killing one in every three adults, making orphans out of every tenth child and decimating entire communities, directly affecting health and life expectancy, the labour force, and household security. Most deaths in young adults aged 25-45 is associated with AIDS. Since the start of the epidemic, some 12.1 million children have been orphaned in Africa, out of the global estimate of 13.2 million. Within the next ten years, it is projected that there will be 40 million AIDS orphans in Africa.

Africa is the only continent so mortally affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is also the continent that has so far been least able to mobilize an adequate response. With Africa already reeling from the onslaught of HIV/AIDS, ADF 2000 will emphasize the urgency of mobilizing all levels of leadership in Africa for the counter-attack.

ECA is convening a Forum of activists and leaders to sharpen perspectives on the AIDS crisis and chart a new course into the future. The Forum will promote policies and mechanisms that harness the efforts of government, private sector and civil society in the design and implementation of intervention programmes. It will influence policy shifts at the national level and seek to impress upon leaders the urgency of advocacy and action.

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

ADF 2000 defines leadership as the capacity to effect changes from a forward-looking, participatory perspective, not simply at the political level, but throughout society. Effective, organized action demands the commitment and

participation of an increasingly strong chain of people, communities and institutions.

- The Forum will examine the leadership role and responsibilities of central and local government in Africa. Governments have to formulate strategies and policies and urgently mobilize resources and partnerships for their implementation. Armed with clarity of vision and steadfastness of purpose, governments provide and maintain appropriate enabling policy environments.
- ADF 2000 will also consider the leadership roles and responsibilities of civil society and the private sector in the fight against HIV/AIDS, encompassing non-governmental, youth and women's organizations, religious groups, trade unions, academia and the media, political parties, traditional and customary leadership, people living with AIDS, the non-traditional health sector as well as the African Diaspora. Various types of advocacy are required for raising AIDS awareness in rural and urban areas and for influencing policies and practices within institutions. Civil society and the private sector will discuss modalities and form networks that reach across national borders and from grassroots to executive levels.
- ADF 2000 will also examine the role and responsibilities of external partners in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The gravity of the HIV/AIDS emergency in Africa dictates higher levels of commitment and coordination from external partners. The discussion will encompass the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international NGOs, religious and private voluntary organizations, and academic institutions and foundations.

OBJECTIVES

ADF 2000 will:

- Analyze the impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa's development prospects;
- Take stock of progress made to date in prevention, treatment and support structures;
- Highlight positive regional, national and local experiences and best practices;
- Examine the resource implications of improved prevention campaigns, treatment programmes and facilities for counselling and support of victims and their families;
- Review decisions from major HIV/AIDS conferences and actions taken at national and regional level;
- Articulate concrete, timeframed follow-up actions and activities by different actors;
- Ensure that adequate resources are put into prevention and care programmes by African governments and their domestic and external partners; and
- Seek consensus on arrangements and mechanisms for follow-up.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Improved understanding of the impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa, within the context of the global threat;
- A broad strategy for surmounting the HIV/AIDS emergency, that includes all the major actors and stakeholders from all parts of society;
- Commitments from African leaders and their development partners to make HIV/AIDS a top priority on the development agenda and to invest early in the fight against the pandemic;
- Enhancement and deepening of intervention through sharing of experiences and best practices across countries; and
- Establishment of mechanisms and networks for follow-up throughout the year 2001 and beyond.

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