

The OAU Special Summit on HIV/AIDS and Other Related Infectious Diseases

Presentation at the *Panel on the Way Forward*

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Mr. Chairman
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government
Honourable Ministers
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a singular honour for me to have the opportunity to address such an august gathering. On behalf of the Economic Commission for Africa, and in my own personal regard, let me begin by expressing my gratitude to President Olusegun Obasanjo and to the people of Nigeria for their warm hospitality and their commitment to seizing the moment at hand.

So many pertinent issues have been presented at this Summit by Heads of State, senior ministers and high ranking international officials that there is little left to add. Many of you are grappling with these urgent issues on a day-to-day basis. Having listened carefully to all that has been raised, and on the basis of the work that ECA has been doing – including the African Development Forum 2000, which produced the African Consensus, a key input into this Summit – let me offer some brief thoughts on the way forward.

My starting point is that HEALTH IS AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT. Without a healthy population, economic growth is going to remain a mirage. We may survive, but we certainly will not grow.

The question then is how we are to operationalize a health-centred development agenda. As we have been repeatedly told in this Summit, we need more money AND better health systems. So how do we get where we want to go?

- First, health sector planning and financing should be mainstreamed within the context of overall national development planning;
- Second, all sectoral plans, including education and agriculture, should integrate disease prevention, control and treatment – especially, but not exclusively, on HIV/AIDS;
- Third, poverty reduction strategies, which are a key operational modality for both comprehensive development and for unlocking concessional financing, must put HIV/AIDS, TB and other infectious diseases at their centre;
- Fourth, we should link debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries' (HIPC) initiative to enhancing social sector provision, including some of the critical health challenges, in particular HIV/AIDS;
- Fifth, we should develop strong national and regional strategic plans, with integral financing reporting and monitoring systems.

Mr. Chairman

Let me elaborate briefly on the need to develop strong strategic plans, including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the national, sub-regional and continental levels.

Working with our partners, we at ECA have identified broad goals that must be achieved for us to successfully mitigate the devastating effects HIV/AIDS and related infectious diseases have had, and continue to have, on our people, on our nations and on our economies.

In order to meet this historic challenge, and as many of you have stressed here this week, we must first and foremost make sure that national efforts are commensurate with the scope of the challenges we face.

To add value to the national effort, we should aggregate common elements of the national response into sub-regional and regional strategies. If we can articulate and advocate on the basis of well-crafted African positions, we will be better placed in the global context.

We need to ensure that plans agreed at sub-regional and regional level are implemented in a coherent manner. We should put in place mechanisms to articulate specific ways to monitor the implementation of the various plans of action that we already have on the table – such as the African Consensus that emanated from ADF 2000, and the Abuja Declaration and framework that we expect to emerge later today.

African institutions should take charge, together with their partners, of developing such mechanisms – which will identify indicators of success and report annually to Summits of Heads of State as well as to different stakeholder groups.

It will also be of critical importance to build on existing synergies between the multiple development agencies working in Africa. Here we should look closely at the United Nations, which has more agencies, funds and programmes working in Africa than in any other region of the world.

In particular, we should work with UNAIDS and its co-sponsors, and leverage effective mechanisms already in place – such as the UN Country Theme Groups and the Resident Coordinator system. These mechanisms can assume a pivotal role in providing the country-based content that will inform and to a large extent drive regional monitoring and reporting.

An essential aspect of the regional strategy will be to clearly articulate realistic expected outcomes. Without a concrete sense of what we are aiming for, we may not be in shape to effectively monitor Africa's progress and success in rolling back HIV/AIDS, TB and other related infectious diseases.

Another important element that will add value is an appropriate communication strategy. We need to build constituencies. We need to develop effective mechanisms for sharing best practices. We need to involve all stakeholders in a sustained and participatory dialogue on African development. We need to mobilize our international partners to support the implementation of our plans. And we need to tell our own story.

To this end, we are consulting with the OAU, UNAIDS and other UN agencies and stakeholder groups on the establishment of a STRUCTURE to monitor and report on the implementation of Africa's plans and strategies. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to discuss this proposal with President Obasanjo, The UN Secretary General, the OAU Secretary General and other leaders, who strongly endorsed this approach.

Mr. Chairman

This is one modest level of partnership that I am proposing, building on what is already in place. Above and beyond this, we need a new Compact with our international development partners, including UN agencies, multilateral institutions and bilateral donors.

This Compact should involve not just increased resource flows – more aid, debt relief and so on. The new Compact implies a new way of doing business, based on African ownership of policies and programmes, long-term commitment of resources, and mutual accountability towards the shared goal of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP), initiated by our host, President Obasanjo, together with Presidents Mbeki and Bouteflika, provides a means for doing exactly this. **THIS IS OUR WAY FORWARD.**

At the Economic Commission for Africa, we are closely involved with the MAP initiative. We are develo

Compact for African Recovery as the technical underpinning of this new partnership. Next week, African Ministers of Finance and Planning will be meeting in Algiers to map out the next stage of this process. In particular, we will examine the domestic resource mobilization requirements of meeting the challenges of the diseases of poverty.

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This is indeed our decisive moment. Within the context of a realistic appraisal of our predicament, learning the lessons of the recent past, establishing new and better partnerships, and underlining that HEALTH IS AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT, we can, and will, move ahead.

Thank you.
