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## First Ladies of Africa Determined to Stop Breast, Cervical and Prostate Cancer Death Tolls



**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 25 July 2016:** The Office of the First Lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), Forum of African First Ladies Against Breast and Cervical Cancer in collaboration with the Princess Nikky Breast Cancer Foundation convened the 10<sup>th</sup> Stop Cervical, Breast & Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference (SCCA) at the African Union Commission (AUC), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The theme of the 2016 meeting is: ***A Decade of***

***Accomplishments – Our enduring legacies and challenges ahead.***

H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia expressed his concern that cancer is increasing at an alarming rate in Africa, and it kills more people than HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis combined. ‘It is time we stand together as one to fight this common disease which affects humanity’ underscored the Prime Minister ‘the time to put in place firm and effective mechanisms made available through education and access to healthcare.’ He further committed to relentless efforts and political will to continue to robust the health care system within Ethiopia and the continent at large. ‘African First Ladies have the ears of mothers’ the Prime Minister appreciated and called upon the First Ladies to intensify the fight against cancer and other reproductive health diseases by involving their husbands the Heads of State to champion the process through ownership and implementing at all levels. H.E. Mr Hailemariam Desalegn reiterated the diverse and rich gathering of the conference embrace collective responsibilities and best practices shared to strengthen efforts towards a sustainable ending of the fight against cancer in Africa. He concluded by reaffirming the commitment of the government of Ethiopia and officially declaring the conference open. He was decorated and appointed a Good Will Ambassador on cancer 2016-2017 in Ethiopia by the Conference.



H.E. Mrs. Roman Tesfaye Abneh, First lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and incoming Chairperson, Forum of African First Ladies/Spouses Against Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer 2016-2017 is championing the battle to stop breast, cervical and prostate cancer in Ethiopia.

In her welcoming remarks, she underscored that 70% of all cancer related deaths occur in

Africa. She said that it was due to lack of awareness of the disease which in most cases the affected person reports the disease when it is at an advance stage leading to little intervention and support. Furthermore, she noted women are the most significantly affected with long suffering as well as psychological trauma associated with cancer. The lack of equipped medical facilities, access to quality and affordable treatment still pose a challenge in African. 'We African First Ladies have recognized the need and urgency to fight against all forms of cancers and to advocate, create awareness at all levels of the continent' H.E. Mrs. Roman stressed. She added that cancer medications should be subsidized for more accessibility, and the African First Ladies must continue to use their platform to make certain that their voices are heard loud and clear at both national as well as continental levels to ensure accessibility of cancer medication to all.

Stating the concrete measures taken by FDRE, H.E. Mrs. Roman said that the prominent are: establishment of the National Cancer Committee, the launching National Cancer Control Plan as well as making cervical cancer screening and treatment services available at the local administrative levels in the country. H.E. Mrs. Roman has demonstrated her dedication to empowering women and addressing nutrition and education for youth in Ethiopia.

H.E. Mrs. Margaret Kenyatta, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya and outgoing Chairperson of Forum of African First Ladies/Spouses Against Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer 2015-2016 in her remarks thanked the government of Ethiopia for its continuous demonstration of a Pan-African cooperation in Africa. 'Cancer affects all of us directly or indirectly' Mrs. Kenyatta emphasized, and therefore it is upon the African Member States to invest, advocate and provide support at national as well as continental level. 'We should ensure national health insurance, accessible chemotherapy for all and the vaccination for young adolescent girls as a preventive measures, we must involve politicians, policy makers and health workers all to fight against cancer' she noted.

Moreover, the First Lady noted that everyone should have a commitment that cancer is not going to cripple the continent regardless of its threats but the continent will rise up to overcome the disease. 'Over the next 10 years we can truly explore great expertise especially those seated here today to have a cancer free Africa' she concluded.

Highlighting one of the aspirations of Agenda 2063, 'A high standard of living and quality life, sound health and the wellbeing for the people of Africa' H.E. Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs speaking on behalf of H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission told the Conference that Africa had already set its priorities for the next half of the century.

Emphasizing on the need to team up to beat cancer, the Commissioner added: 'All partners need to collaborate to establish adequate facilities for early detection, treatment and prevention of these cancers. I would like to emphasize the need for research into cancers and support to African research institutions such as the African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer.'



Dr. Tewdros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of FDRE in his goodwill message vowed that carrying the burden of cancer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an acceptable. He stated that his government believes health is a human right issue and a means to development. He called upon all stakeholders to demonstrate solidarity to save lives.

Princess Nikky Onyeri, Co-Founder and Director General, Forum of African First Ladies/Spouses Against Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer and Co-Founder, World Forum of First Ladies and Women presented the theme of the conference highlighting the core values of the princess Nikky Breast foundation: Advocacy and education, innovative tools for screening, access to medication and capacity building. She expressed her deep appreciation to H.E. Dr. Dlamini Nkosazana Zuma, Chairperson of the AUC for her commitment and forwarding the cancer agenda continentally.

Dr. Keseteberhan Admassu, Minister of Health of FDRE, urged Member States to redouble their efforts in addressing the end of breast, cervical and prostate cancer in Africa. According to him with the right human resources and capacities, enshrined with effective policies this can be achieved. Dr. Admassu emphasized the need for African States to scale up for impact, ensuring an adequate and accessibly health care systems in their respective states.

Professor Dr. Oliver Bolger, Vice President, Global Academic programmes, MD Anderson Cancer Center, USA shared his personal experience with combating the deadly disease cancer. In the fight against cancer, Prof. Bolger highlighted four prerequisite: strong and dedicated leadership, collaboration across borders,

multidisciplinary approach and finally the expertise. 'Cancer knows no boundaries, it affects all' he underlined.

The conference was a platform where stakeholders actively working in cancer prevention and control came together to reflect on the success and the challenges faced in the prevention and control of cervical, breast and prostate cancer of the past decade. It was a unique opportunity of experience and knowledge exchange for all who participated, i.e. Speakers of African First Ladies, leaders of cancer research institutions and hospitals, scientists, Heads of UN Agencies and other International organizations, civil society and private sector representatives as well as cancer survivors from all corners of the world.

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