

**PR N°061/2012****AWA MANDATE BROADENED TO INCLUDE TB AND MALARIA**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 21 June 2012- AIDS Watch Africa (AWA), a platform originally intended to spearhead action and mobilise resources for HIV/AIDS, has now been broadened to include advocacy and resource mobilisation for tuberculosis and malaria as well.

“The mandate of AWA has been broadened”, said Advocate Bience Gawanas- African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, when she spoke to experts attending an AWA consultative meeting at the AU, on 21 June. “We have moved beyond just HIV”, she added.

Commissioner Gawanas highlighted two serious challenges facing Africa as it seeks to reduce its disease burden, the highest in the world. One challenge she highlighted was that if external funds dry up, the progress made in dealing with AIDS, TB and malaria will be reversed. “We have already raised expectations by saying HIV does not necessarily mean death”, she recalled, urging the experts to take the role of mobilising resources seriously so that those on life long AIDS treatment drugs continue to access them.

The Commissioner also urged Africa to take seriously its responsibility to provide medication for its people. “Lives and deaths of Africans cannot be left to the market place”, she said.

AWA, formed in 2001 by eight African Heads of State, has now been revitalised as an advocacy, mobilisation, and accountability platform of Heads of State and Government for mobilising resources and stronger leadership for HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria. It is spearheaded by an action committee comprising Heads of State (champions) and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC). The revitalised AWA needs a clear strategy in coordinating AWA activities. It is in this view that the AUC, in collaboration with UNAIDS, organised today’s meeting, which will end tomorrow. The consultative experts committee is meeting to draft documents on the future direction of AWA, and the draft “roadmap on shared responsibilities for Africa’s HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria response”, to be submitted to the AWA action committee. The outcome of an AWA action committee meeting, to be held in July, will be presented to the AU Assembly for endorsement.

Also officiating at the experts meeting today was the UNAIDS Representative to the AU and the Economic Commission for Africa Ms Rosemary Museminali.

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