

**PRESS RELEASE N°098/2015****THE 1ST MEETING OF THE SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, POPULATION AND DRUG CONTROL OPENS IN ADDIS ABABA**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13 April 2015: The first Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control (STC-HPDC-1) has opened at the African Union HQ in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The (STC-HPDC) meeting replaces the biennial AU Ministerial Conferences of Drug Control and Health. Aware of the enormous challenges to sustainable development, security and the rule of law in Africa, the Commission chose “Universal and inclusive access to health care” as the theme for this meeting.

Participants to the meeting are drawn from ministries in charge of Health, Population and Drug Control, UN partner agencies, the Pan African Parliament, the Regional Economic Communities, NGOs, the Media, academics and Civil Society Organizations working in the field of health, population and drugs control.

Delivering the keynote address at the opening ceremony of the experts on health, population and drug control meeting, the Director of Social Affairs, Dr. Olawale I. Maiyegun highlighted that “health is an intrinsic human right as well as a central input to poverty reduction and socioeconomic development”. He underscored the point that serious “lack of resources for health and a range of system constraints hamper global and national efforts to expand health services to everyone”. Dr. Maiyegun also lamented the impact that illicit drug production, trafficking and consumption continue to pose on valuable human lives and productive years of many people especially youth being lost on the Continent. He cited the recent Ebola crisis in West Africa which has highlighted the link between health and the security sector interventions saying that in communities where the security sector had been deployed, the spread of the disease was arrested more quickly while essential drugs could also be distributed more effectively.

In the next two days, delegates from across the Continent will discuss issues aimed at achieving health and social justice for all at continental, regional and national levels, as well as to establish synergies among the health, population and drug control sectors. The experts will also review expiring health and nutrition policies namely: Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy; “Abuja Call”; Maputo Plan of Action; Africa Health Strategy and make recommendations. They will further discuss progress on on-going health,

nutrition and population initiatives and assess the state of population with its dynamics and make recommendations for action. Finally, they will discuss mechanisms that aim to promote scaling up of an integrated and balanced response towards drug control in Africa and ensuring access to controlled drugs for medical purposes, whilst preventing diversion and abuse and establish and strengthen national and regional epidemiological networks for improved data on the continent.

The Report and recommendations of the Experts will be put to the meeting of the Ministers of Health, Population and Drug Control which gets underway later this week for further deliberations.

Meanwhile, a side event on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health geared towards addressing progress, gaps and plans within the Framework of the Post-2015 Agenda and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health was jointly organized by the Commission and Save the Children. A series of parallel sessions and side events such as the report of the Multi-National Task Force on the African Centre for Disease Control (ACDC), implementation of the "Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014" and report of the 7th meeting of the African Task Force on Food and Nutrition Development will be also be held. Delegates will also get updates on the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA), Cost of Hunger Study in Africa (COHA) and 2015 MNCH Report.

WB/ WZM

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