

# **Opening Remarks**

**By**

**H.E. Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn**

**Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic  
Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the  
African Union**

**At**

**The Special Summit of African Heads of State  
and Government on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and  
Malaria**

**15 July 2013**

**Abuja**

***Excellency Mr. Goodluck Elebe Jonathan, President of the  
Federal Republic of Nigeria,***

***Excellencies Heads of State and Government,***

***Excellency, Dr. Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,***

***Excellency Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UNFPA,***

***Distinguished Representatives of other United Nation Organizations,***

***Representatives of development partners,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to the Special Summit of the African Union on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. I would like to seize this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to my good friend and brother, President Goodluck Jonathan, for his country's firm commitment and leadership in the fight against these diseases as well as for organizing the Special Summit together with the African Union, the United Nations Agencies and Development Partners.

The main objective of our Summit is clearly reflected in the theme: "Ownership, Accountability, and Sustainability of HIV/AIDS,

Tuberculosis and Malaria Response in Africa: Past, Present, and Future” which allows us to review achievements and challenges in reversing the impact of these three diseases. This Special Summit will also offer a good opportunity for us to assess the state of maternal, neonatal and child birth in our continent with a view to reinvigorate our commitments to achieve the health related Millennium Development Goals.

***Excellencies,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Our collective aspiration to bring about socio-economic transformation will not be achieved without having a healthy and productive human resource. Although Africa is richly endowed with natural resources, its human capital is the key to unleashing its potential for socio-economic growth and development. Therefore, without ensuring the health and overall wellbeing of our peoples, we cannot be able to guarantee the sustainability of the robust economic growth that we have been able to achieve over the last decade. That is why expanding universal access to health services in our countries is very critical.

As you all know, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have been major causes of morbidity and mortality in Africa taking a heavy toll on our productive population thereby hampering our socio-economic development. Over the past decade, however, we have made tremendous efforts in combating these diseases and encouraging results have been achieved in this regard. According to a report jointly prepared by the African Union, UNECA, UNDP and AfDB, several African countries have made impressive progress towards achieving health related and other MDG targets.

For instance, about 22 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have reduced new HIV infection by more than 25% and made considerable reduction in AIDS mortality. In fact, some African countries including Ethiopia have reduced the incidence of HIV infection by more than 50%. Moreover, 9 countries in Africa are also well on track towards achieving 75% reduction in malaria case incidence by 2015. The achievements were indeed made possible through strong country ownership and leadership, active community involvement and unprecedented global support in delivering life saving medicines to the majority of our peoples.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that challenges still remain in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in the Abuja call for Action as well as the targets set in the health related MDGs. Particularly, many African countries are off track in reducing the burden of maternal and child deaths, which underscores the need to reinvigorate our concerted efforts at all levels to address the underlying causes of maternal and child death. We also have a long way to go in terms of expanding access to malaria and TB diagnosis and treatment.

Therefore, we should draw the right lessons from our achievements and challenges to scale up our strategic interventions in order to further strengthen our health systems and ensure universal access to health services with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, we need to adopt the right policies, programmes and strategies as well as demonstrate the necessary political commitment and strong leadership.

Building our health systems from the bottom up by ensuring active community participation is, of course, very critical in order to ensure universal access to health services and reach out to the poor

and marginalized sections of our peoples. This is precisely what we in Ethiopia have been trying to do through our flagship health extension programme by deploying 38,000 Health Extension Workers, almost all of them women, across the whole country. The role that was played by model households was an equally important. As a result, we have managed to achieve tremendous progress over the last decade. As I indicated earlier, the rate of new HIV infection has been significantly reduced. The number of women dying in childbirth has decreased. The number of immunized children has increased.

***Excellencies,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The role of international development partners in channeling much needed financial resources has indeed been one of the key factors to the successes that we have achieved in the last decade. We owe them much deserved gratitude for this generous support. I wish to take this opportunity to call upon our partners not only to scale-up the quality of their support but also to avail flexible and predictable financing in a sustainable manner. Such cooperation will indeed assist us in making progress towards achieving the

MDGs. On our part, we need to deliver results based on the principle of ownership and accountability by efficiently utilizing those resources.

***Excellencies,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I am happy to note that Ethiopia's proposal to establish an African Centre for Disease Control (African CDC) was considered by the Executive Council and, as indicated in the Declaration of our Summit, an agreement was reached to work on the modalities. The establishment of this Centre will, no doubt, reduce our over-dependence on foreign CDCs.

Finally, I hope this Special Summit will afford us the opportunity to renew our commitment to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria thereby laying a solid foundation for the socio-economic transformation of Africa.

I thank you

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