



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by

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to the

THE EVENT FOR LAUNCHING NATIONAL POLICY ON HIV/AIDS IN SUD

Khartoum, Sudan, 15 July 2004

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the gathering for Launching National Policy on HIV/AIDS in Sudan. I wish to thank H.E. Dr Ahmed Belal Othman, Federal Minister of Health of Sudan and his team for arranging this event.

Dear Colleagues,

As you know HIV/AIDS is a priority at the global level as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO. It is estimated that around 700 000 people in the Region are living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2003. However, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is still bui

up and spreading in the countries of the Region, slowly but at an accelerating pace. The epidemic is spreading fastest in Djibouti, Somalia and Sudan.

Regionally, Sudan has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence of any country. By the end of December 2003, the Sudanese National AIDS Control Programme (SNACP) had reported 1437 cases of HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic, of which 1437 were in 2003. The national estimate for the number of people living with HIV/AIDS is 600 000, with a prevalence of 2.6% (according to UNAIDS and WHO) and an overall prevalence of 2.6% according to a national survey done on different population groups. To date, only about 4000 AIDS patients, out of an estimated 100 000 in need of treatment, are actually receiving antiretroviral therapy (0.4%).

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to observe that Sudan has moved several steps forward in its fight against HIV. Recently, the Ministry of Health has declared its commitment to HIV/AIDS and issued decrees that declare HIV/AIDS a priority disease to be treated at the primary health care level and that dictate scaling up free-of-charge services for testing and counselling and for delivery of antiretroviral therapy. To scale up antiretroviral treatment and care, Sudan has officially requested WHO that it be included as a focus country in the 3 by 5 Initiative, and has set a target to put 20 000 AIDS patients on antiretroviral therapy by the end of 2005.

I wish to congratulate the Ministry of Health and the SNACP for the development of a national policy and a national strategic plan 2003–2007. This plan involves multi-sectoral collaboration and community mobilization for a coordinated national response and concentration on education, prevention and advocacy, and on treatment and care.

Dear colleagues,

In the past decade, WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been supporting the countries in the Region in their efforts to strengthen the response to HIV. Sudan is one of the priority countries for regional support. Regular budget has been allocated to support priority country activities in the field of surveillance, clinical management of sexually transmitted infections, voluntary counselling and testing, monitoring and evaluation, programme management, blood safety and awareness raising. In addition, extrabudgetary resources have been provided to support recruitment of one international country officer as well as national officers.

WHO, in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), is supporting the efforts of the Ministry of Health in the establishment of a Sudanese HIV Training Centre (Knowledge Hub). It is hoped that this centre will become a Knowledge Hub that could serve as a sub-regional platform for training, direct technical assistance and networking with neighbouring countries. WHO has also supported Sudan in developing its proposal for phase 3 of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), amounting to 21 000 000 US Dollars, to cover the cost of implementation of the national strategic plan.

Dear colleagues,

Let us make use of this opportunity of being together—the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and other partners—to concentrate our efforts on helping Sudan in its fight against the spread of the epidemic.