

UNAIDS

UNAIDS Executive Director applauds Ethiopia on its remarkable progress in the AIDS response

<p>Feature story</p>

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UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidib congratulated the country on the dramatic decline in new HIV infections it has achieved during the past ten years on 17 December, while on an official visit to Ethiopia. Between 2001 and 2011, the rate of new HIV infections in Ethiopia among adults has been reduced by 90%.

"This drop in new HIV infections is a huge breakthrough," said Mr Sidib. "Ethiopia's achievement demonstrates to the world that it is possible to prevent HIV in sub-Saharan Africa."

Mr Sidib met with Ethiopia's new Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn, who took over as the country's leader when Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi died in August this year. UNAIDS Executive Director congratulated Prime Minister Haile Mariam on his appointment and expressed confidence that he will continue the legacy of his predecessor, who was known as an important advocate for the AIDS response.

Prime Minister Haile Mariam said that his country's development agenda was people centered and that it was designed to improve the health status of families with their full participation, using local technologies and community skills and wisdom.

Mr Sidib called on the prime minister, as the incoming Chairperson of the African Union and as the chair of AIDS Watch Africa (AWA), to strengthen AWA as an accountability mechanism. Mr Sidib also asked for the prime minister's help in translating into action a new roadmap adopted by African heads of State at the 19th summit of the African Union held in Addis Ababa in July. The roadmap charts a new course for the continent's responses to AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility and global solidarity.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom, acknowledged the support of UNAIDS in helping Ethiopia make a dramatic reduction in new HIV infections. He also stressed that the new road map on shared responsibility was an innovative approach that encouraged African leaders to own the transformation of health responses on their continent.

While Ethiopia has made huge progress in reducing new HIV infections, it still faces challenges in

stopping new HIV infections among children. UNAIDS' latest World AIDS Day Report finds only 24% of pregnant women living with HIV receive antiretroviral therapy to reduce HIV transmission. Mr Sidib met with Dr Kesetebirhan Admassu, Minister of Health, who briefed him on the country's new accelerated plan for eliminating new HIV infections in children and providing paediatric antiretroviral treatment to children. Dr Kesetebirhan Admassu emphasized that preventing new HIV infections among children will be given more focus in Ethiopia's health programme.

During his one day visit to Ethiopia, Mr Sidib also met with Commissioner for Social Affairs at the African Union Commission, Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko. The Commissioner requested UNAIDS support to the African Union Commission in developing a cross-cutting programme for the AIDS response involving all sectors of the African Union Commission.

Mr Sidib met with Commissioner for Peace and Security at the African Union Commission, Ramtane Lamamra and called for the commissioner's support in pushing for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1983, which was adopted in June 2011. The resolution calls for HIV prevention efforts among uniformed services to be aligned with efforts to end sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

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