

AUC NEWS



The newsletter of the African Union Commission

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AFRICA LAUNCHES BOLD, RENEWED EFFORT TO STEP UP PACE OF HIV PREVENTION

WITH THE THEME "STEP UP THE PACE OF HIV PREVENTION IN AFRICA"



As the world grapples with ways to mitigate the daunting impact of AIDS on Africa's development, a call emerged loud and clear from African political leaders in major African cities for 2006 to be a "Year for Accelerating HIV Prevention in the African Region". Innovative approaches, creative thinking and more holistic actions are needed across Africa, from all involved, if prevention is to succeed.

In order to launch the year, a special launch ceremony was held at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 11 April. AU Commission Chairperson, Prof. Alpha Konare, under whose leadership the HIV prevention acceleration was launched in partnership with UN

agencies said, "We have heard time again that prevention is better than cure, but our problem is turning policies into actions to reach everyone, everywhere with services on a sustained basis to achieve meaningful HIV prevention in Africa." In the long run, he said, behaviour change is much cheaper than allowing people to become infected.

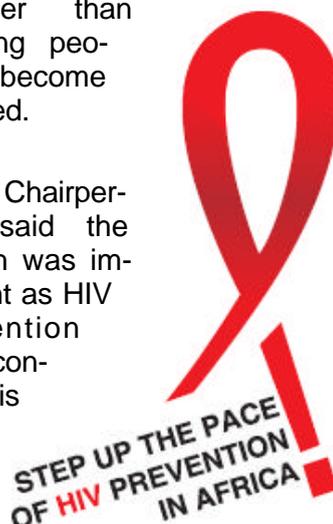
The Chairperson said the launch was important as HIV prevention and control is eve-

ryone's responsibility, not just that for the World Health Organisation or ministries of health. He welcomed the collective efforts of the AU and UN agencies in organising the launch as the right approach, and appreciated the role played by the Organisation of First Ladies Against AIDS and the Coalition of Ethiopian Women Against AIDS.

"Now is the time to stand together, to build a strong wall to block further spread of the killer virus and protect future generations from the scourge of HIV", he said

Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, noted that the commitment to declare 2006 a year for acceleration of HIV prevention in Africa has a "special meaning for the people of the continent". Many African countries, he observed, have been implementing prevention interventions, which have been reasonably successful. "But the progress has not been commensurate with the challenges we face. This is why we need to scale up our prevention measures," he said.

Rwandan First Lady and President of the Organization of First Ladies in Africa, Mrs Jeannette Kagame, who



spoke on the role of women in HIV prevention, said “women, have proved to be leaders in the struggle to rid our world of AIDS, but have also paid the highest price...”. She noted that “thousands of women worldwide have been working tirelessly, and often anonymously, as care givers to affected family and community members, but the face of the epidemic in Africa is still distinctly female”. She also called for a more results-oriented HIV prevention approach, including door to door education campaigns across the continent.

According to the World Health Organisation and UNAIDS, putting in place comprehensive and interlinked HIV prevention activities has the potential to avert 63% of the new infections expected to occur by 2010.

Without effective prevention activities, as part of the overall strategy of universal access, the already severe toll of AIDS will continue to rise. The statistics are a cause for concern.

- Since the 1980s, 50 million Africans have been infected by HIV; 22 million have died
- Parental deaths have led to the orphaning of more than 12 million children
- “Sickness and death resulting from HIV/AIDS is undermining agricultural productivity and economic growth, and reversing progress in areas such as life expectancy and infant mortality

Now is the time to stand together, to build a strong wall to block further spread of the killer virus and protect future generations from the scourge of HIV”

Alpha Oumar Konare

- Despite all efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, 3.2 million new HIV infections occurred in 2005
- HIV infections are rising most rapidly among young people aged 15-24, especially women.

WHO Regional Director for Africa Dr. Luis Sambo, agreed that prevention, care and treatment are interdependent parts of a comprehensive approach and that accelerating prevention involves addressing root causes of HIV transmission; strengthening health care systems; expanding the reach of HIV testing and prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and developing more effective strategies for reaching women and youth with information on how to protect themselves against HIV infection.

UNAIDS Director for Country and Regional Support, Mr. Michel Sidibe, recommended that AIDS responses must be exceptional, but not isolated, requiring balancing of political momentum on AIDS and putting countries in the lead. He also stressed the need for an appropriate balance between emergency action and long term commitment.

In his remarks, the Executive Secretary of the ECA, Abdoulie Janneh, said “We must improve the quality of information on HIV prevention and make it available to all, especially our vulnerable groups.” He added that as countries in the region scale up efforts to prevent HIV this year, they should make the courageous move to align their budgets to their national AIDS plans and balance allocation be-

tween prevention and treatment; and care and support.

In a speech read on his behalf, the Chairman of AIDS Watch Africa, President Olusegun Obasanjo said the organization serves as a watchdog on the implementation of HIV AIDS strategies in Africa.

Other speakers included representatives of AIDS Watch Africa, Youth Networks and People Living with HIV and AIDS. UN Agencies were commended for providing the required technical support for the launch of the initiative. The support provided included assistance to countries to revise scale up plans, mobilization of additional resources to support the scaling up of HIV prevention and advocacy for acceleration of HIV prevention.

An information kit was distributed at the launch, representing a first step toward engaging and informing the media on the urgent need to accelerate HIV prevention.

The kit reveals that accelerated prevention demands strong national leadership, scaling-up successful interventions, strengthening health systems, and applying a comprehensive approach that addresses social, cultural and economic factors fuelling the epidemic (along with strictly medical interventions).

This launch was timely in view of the Special Summit of AU Heads of State and Government on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria due to be held in Abuja, Nigeria, from May 2-4, and UN General Assembly Session on AIDS in New York at the beginning of June.

MINISTERS AGREE IT'S TIME TO IMPROVE AFRICA'S RAILWAY TRANSPORT SUB SECTOR

It is perhaps a great irony that most of the railway infrastructure in Africa today was set up during colonial times, in some cases more than 100 years ago. Very few new railway lines have been constructed on the continent since independence and there has been little investment in rolling stock from the 1990s on. Of the developments made in this sub sector, most have been at national rather than continental level. Most efforts in this transport sub sector were aimed, not at building on the existing infrastructure but more at restructuring and privatization. The results, according to Commissioner Zoba of Infrastructure and Energy Department, were 50- 50. Moreover, there is also no interconnection between the different networks except in North and Southern Africa. This situation slows down the socio-economic integration of the continent.

In the meanwhile, railway transport elsewhere is experiencing a period of prosperity. E.g. in Europe 80% of transport projects are in the railway sub sector. It is time for Africa to improve its railway transportation sub sector, considering the many advantages that railway offers, especially in the context of the political, social, cultural and economic integration of the African continent.

These were the views of African ministers responsible for railway transportation and experts in the field who met at the first AU ministerial meeting for the railways sub sector from 10-14 April 2006, in the Congolese capital of Brazzaville. They were meeting to define and adopt a shared vision of railway transport development in Africa, and elaborate appropriate strategies while taking account of immediate needs. They also developed medium and long-term plans for the development of transport infrastructure on the basis of policies and plans defined at regional level. Their decisions are expected to result in a coordinated, interoperable, interconnected and continent wide development of the African railway transport sub sector.

The meeting was unanimous in the advantages of building and maintaining a solid railway infrastructure such as: railway is the most suitable means of transporting huge volumes of people and goods over long distances; by so doing, it opens up the hinterland and allows landlocked countries to trade: railway is the least expensive and least polluting form of transport and it brings business and societies together. Railway also links Africa to the rest of the world. In short, railway transportation is good for the integration of Africa

One of the major considerations of

the meeting was how to set up and maintain the infrastructure which no doubt, involves immense human, material and financial cost. Chief among the decisions reached by the ministers was their agreement to work jointly in the designing and implementation of projects contained in the AU Master plan, which is an integrated plan for the medium and long-term development of transport infrastructure on the basis of policies and plans defined at regional level. It would be an instrument for analysis, decision making and monitoring, a source for information on Africa, and an instrument for research and mobilization of funds. The role of the African Union was outlined as being to provide leadership, coordination, harmonization and facilitation and being the agent of change.

The ministers were informed that the AU has already started consultations with UNECA to create seamless teams of geometers and engineers. A team of consultants has been hired to backstop their efforts. Together, the experts and consultants will map out existing railway systems and corridors, analyse how networks are functioning, establish costs and identify possible sources of funding. Their findings will be



Model trains on display at the Brazzaville Ministers' Conference



Commissioner Zoba addressing the ministerial meeting

consistently fed back into the Master Plan. Some work has already gone into sourcing finance through the EU-AU partnership, the G8 and the African Development Bank among others.

The ministers also decided to establish an Infrastructure Investment Fund to support railway development, to promote the access of women to professions within the railway sub sector, to encourage states to pursue structural reforms within the framework of public-private sector partnership and to ensure professionalism in the railway sector through the establishment of centers of excellence for continuous capacity development of railway personnel. It was noted that there is a need to push the railway sub sector from the realms of social welfare to a more commercial approach. In order to track progress and make feed back into the overall plan, the conference of ministers responsible for transport will meet every 2 years.

Progress in the development of the railway sub sector will be measured against a Plan of Action adopted at the Brazzaville meeting, which runs from 2006 to 2008. The plan lists objectives, activities and actions, result indicators



All aboard.... This poster shows President Denis Sassou Nguesso giving the green flag for the further development of railways

and the responsible structures as well as time frames within which the objectives have to be met.

The meeting benefited greatly from the wide range of African and international experts present because they were drawn from both the public and private sectors and each one gave their own inputs based on experiences. For example, experts looked at the state of the transport sector on the continent which was found to be lagging behind that in other parts of the world. They pointed out that the problems faced by railways should be placed in the total context of underdevelopment of Africa's economies: there is therefore a need to grow the economies.

Political will will be very important in this endeavour, as will peace and security, in order to build investor confidence. The experts also agreed that development should be driven by Africans and supported by devel-



H.E Andre Okombi Salissa: Congolese Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation

opment partners. Human and institutional capacity must be enhanced, more use of Information Communication Technologies is necessary and there will be need to deal effectively with the threat posed by HIV/AIDS and malaria.

The experts also took some time to share experiences and learn lessons from each other. For example Lesotho said they are working within the context of NEPAD and SADC to expand their existing network. Kenya gave an example of the one stop border posts being developed with Uganda. This evidence gave credence to calls for the establishment of a center of excellence in the railway sub sector. The experts called for more experience sharing with other continental railway organizations. In this regard, a representative of the European Transport Networks gave an outline of how they have managed development of their railway systems, which also took environmental concerns into account.

The conference was officially closed by Congolese Prime Minister H.E Mr.

Isidore Mvouba who exhorted the ministers to ensure they meet the expectations of the African people.



L: Delegate to the ministerial conference.



R: Mr Baba Moussa: Director Infrastructure and Energy

ONLY 8 RECS WILL BE RECOGNIZED

Ministers agree to halt recognition of new RECS

The First Conference of African Ministers of Integration on the Rationalization of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 30 to 31 March 2006. A Meeting of Experts held from 27 to 29 March 2006 at the same venue, preceded the Ministerial Conference. The preparatory work for the Conference had started with the holding of two regional consultative meetings held in Accra, Ghana, in October 2005 and Lusaka, Zambia, in March 2006. The African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa organized these consultative meetings, including the Conference of Ministers. The meeting agreed to halt the recognition of any more new RECs and to recognize only the existing eight.

At the meeting, Economic Affairs Commissioner Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba highlighted the need for rationalisation of the RECs. He pointed out to the key challenges facing African integration, including the proliferation and overlapping of RECs pursuing similar mandates, the multiplicity of membership to RECs, overlapping of RECs and inadequate resources. Rationalisation would therefore mean addressing the constraints impinging on the RECs' ability to generate and channel sustainable collective efforts towards Africa's integration.

The meeting underscored the

importance of the rationalisation process as an important step in ensuring realisation of the Abuja treaty for the establishment of an African Economic Community. RECS are the building blocks of the Community.



Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba

The meeting also noted that the consultative meetings of Accra and Lusaka as well as the experts meeting of Ouagadougou, in preparation for the Ministerial meeting, all strongly suggested that harmonization and coordination of the policies and programmes of the RECs is the preferred option for rationalization, at this point in time. Delegates pointed out that the existing RECs had achieved a lot in terms of peace and security and protection of the environment.

At the end, the ministers came up with a declaration. Excerpts are reproduced below:

WE, African Ministers responsible for Integration, meeting in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso on 30 and 31 March 2006 on the Rationalization of Regional Economic Communities (RECs); hav-

ing deliberated on the rationalization process in Africa;

HEREBY AGREE TO:

- i. Request the Assembly of the African Union (AU) to halt the recognition of new RECs. Accordingly, only the following eight RECs should remain recognized:
 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
 - Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA);
 - Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS);
 - Southern African Development Community (SADC);
 - Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD);
 - the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA);
 - Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and
 - East African Community (EAC).
- ii. Recognize, beside the eight RECs listed above, the past and ongoing cooperation and integration efforts by existing Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) on the continent;
- iii. Revisit the Abuja Treaty to rearrange the timetable of its implementation taking into account the provisions of the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99, and finalize the new

.... the consultative meetings of Accra and Lusaka as well as the experts meeting of Ouagadougou, .. all strongly suggested that harmonization and coordination of the policies and programmes of the RECs is the preferred option for rationalization, at this point in time.

Protocol on Relations between the AU and the RECs for signature in the shortest time possible;

iv. Request the AUC and the RECs to:

- Harmonize and coordinate policies and programmes of RECs as important strategies for rationalization;
- Put in place mechanisms to facilitate the process of harmonization and coordination within and among the RECs;
- Carry out an institutional audit of the RECs to assess the challenges and efficiency constraints in implementing the Abuja Treaty. The AUC should, in consultation with the RECs and in collabora-

tion with ECA, provide a clear timetable and benchmarks for the implementation of the Treaty taking into account the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99;

v. Encourage the RECs to promote free movement of persons, goods, capital and services in order to enhance continental integration;

vi. Urge Member States to honour their financial and other obligations to

RECs to enable them carry out their mandates with particular reference to the integration process;

vii. Invite the African Union to institutionalise the meeting of African Ministers responsible for Integration to follow up on the continental integration process.

The meeting was attended by 32 member states of the African Union and all 8 RECS.



An exhibition mounted at the conference venue promoted entrepreneurship

EXPERTS ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MEET

The experts' meeting on Migration and Development was held in Algiers, Algeria in fulfillment of the January 2006 Khartoum Summit Executive Council Decision (EC.CL/Decc.264 (V111)). The objective of the meeting was to prepare a common African position for the Africa-Europe Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development which will be convened later this year.

42 member states of the African Union attended the meeting. 13 regional and international organizations as well as 3 organi-

sations in the field of migration in the diaspora also attended.

In his statement to the meeting, AUC Chairperson Professor Alpha Oumar Konare deplored the images that were being aired on international television depicting young protestors in Europe and described them as bona fide Africans in search of a fair share of the proceeds of development. He observed that able bodied young men and women will continue to emigrate to Europe in large numbers if Africa remains under developed. He also recalled that during the Summit in Khartoum, the AU lead-

ership expressed its grave concern over illegal immigration of African youths and deplored the inhuman and degrading treatment often meted out to African migrants residing in Africa and abroad. Therefore, he concluded there was need to look at migration in a holistic manner.

The experts meeting came up with an African Common Position on the issue of migration, which contains recommendations in three categories: national, continental and international.

FIRST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION

As ICTs are becoming more widely used and benefiting more people, the majority of the African population either does not reap these benefits or are effectively cut off from them. In the digital society, Africa's economic and social performance will greatly depend on the extent she can use the potential of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), incorporate them in the economy and build up a knowledge-based society.

Indeed, the African Union strategic framework (2004-2007) identifies the widening digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world as a key challenge, and takes note of the fact that ICTs are key ingredients for speeding up development in Africa particularly in trade and business promotion, providing universal access to education and health and promoting good governance.

It was in this respect that the first African ICT ministerial conference was held in the Egyptian capital, Cairo from 18- 20 April 2006. The conference was held in accordance with the January 2006 decision of the Executive Council Assembly in Khartoum, EX.CL/238(VIII), which authorized the African Union Commission "to organize a conference of the African Ministers of ICT with the participation of the Regional Economic Communities and other partners - to develop an implemen-

tation framework of the WSIS decisions and the African Regional Action Plan on Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) programme".



Commissioner Najia Essayed at the ICT Ministerial Conference

The conference had, inter alia, the following objectives:

- i. Formalize and institutionalize the African Ministerial Conference on ICT
- ii. Develop implementation and follow-up mechanisms for the African Regional Action plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE).
- iii. Discuss resources mobilization and capacity building for



the implementation of ARAPKE.

In the development of ICTs on the continent, the role of the AU would be to

- i. Facilitate with partners the development and harmonization of ICT policies in AU member States.
- ii. Initiate actions aimed at the dissemination of results of implementation programmes (e.g. publications, showcasing projects and events), and, if necessary, by strategic studies addressing emerging problems or opportunities, or any other key issues for ICT evolution in Africa.
- iii. Convene meetings of the Ministerial Conference, the Bureau as well as those of the Work Groups and produce reports to be submitted to the Executive Council and AU Summits.
- iv. In conjunction with partners, mobilize resources for implementing the agreed programmes.
- v. Lead delegations to international processes and negotiations on ICT.
- vi. Provide a focal point for liaising with United Nations agencies on policy and technical assistance on programmes
- vii. Promoting ICTs in Africa, including engaging the youth, diaspora and women in implementation of the Action Plan.

The African Union led commemorations of the 12th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide on 7 April at a ceremony held at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. Diplomats, AUC staff members, leaders of religious organisations, representatives of AU partner organisations and members of the Rwandese community in Addis Ababa, led by their ambassador, His Excellency Honourable Protais Musoni, held a two hour commemoration ceremony. AUC Deputy President Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka attended.

Although the terrible events of 1994 are now 12 years old, they seemed to come to life again. According to reports given at the ceremony, 1 million people were killed in the genocide in one month. While part of the ceremony was dedicated to showing what happened in those dark days, another was dedicated to encouraging Africa and the world to say NO to genocide and all forms of killings as encapsulated in the theme "TRUTH AND COURAGE TO SAY NO TO GENOCIDE".

Commissioner Julia Joiner told the gathering that the ceremony was a mark of determination by the AU to underscore collective responsibility for what happened in Rwanda. She saluted the memory of those who died in the genocide and said Africa's future generations must never witness such calamity. She however warned of the ever present danger of smaller scale yet equally serious killings going on in some parts of the continent. People of Africa, she said, must all unite in the "never again" cry.

AU COMMEMORATES 12TH ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDA GENOCIDE

**This year's theme
"TRUTH AND COURAGE TO
SAY NO TO GENOCIDE"**



Some of the leaders of the African Union Commission at the genocide commemoration

A film on the genocide was shown. It chronicled the events of the terrible month in 1994 and also showed personal testimony of those who witnessed the massacres, sometimes of their loved ones. Many in the audience will forever remember the woman who told of how she got so thirsty while lying among the bodies of her murdered kith and kin for what must have seemed like an eternity that she drank their blood. They will also remember the harrowing tales of people being killed en masse, of babies killed as they lay on their mothers' backs and of the sheer numbers of people who lost their lives.

Those who spoke on behalf of the Gacaca courts and the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR) underscored the efforts be-

ing made at the local level and at a higher, international level to bring the perpetrators of the crimes to justice, to disclose the truth about the genocide, to eradicate impunity, to encourage reconciliation among Rwandans and to improve Rwanda's ability to deal with its problems in future. There were also calls for the African Union and the international community to do more to avert such disasters before they happen. As one contributor put it the major lesson from the ICTR process is that it is far much better to prevent genocide than to try to account for it later.

The minister of Local Government, Good Governance, Rural Development and Social Affairs of the Republic of Rwanda thanked the AU for commemorating the day annually and thanked all those who remember the day in their hearts. He said

genocide is a reflection of a failure of leadership both at local and international level. He observed that the theme for this year was chosen to highlight the determination needed to face the consequences of genocide and a desire to move on after resolution of those challenges. He also urged the international community and member states to continue apprehending suspects that live in their countries and have them tried in a court of law, preferably in Rwanda.

Participants observed a minutes' silence in honour of the victims of the Rwandan genocide and those of other massacres throughout the world before signing a book of condolences.

COURSE FOCUSES ON GENDER RESPONSIVE ECONOMIC POLICY MAKING

In April, the African Union, in conjunction with the United Nations Institute for Economic Planning and Development (IDEA) held a course on Gender Responsive Economic Policy Making.

The course was designed to fill a capacity gap for African economic policy-makers, budget-

continent. The course was also aimed at enhancing the gender awareness of African trade negotiators.

The course was very pertinent to Africa, especially in the light of research carried out in several countries as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategies elaboration, which showed that, in order to

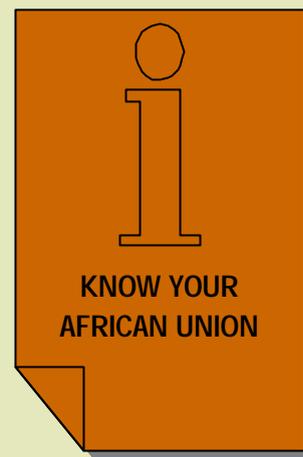


Ms. Winnie Byanyima : Director; Women, Gender and Development (Front row center)
With some workshop participants

planners, development practitioners and policy advocates. It was intended to equip participants with the analytical and conceptual skills needed to understand gender in the context of economic and social development, and to acquire some practical tools for integrating gender into poverty reduction and development policy frameworks and processes on the

reduce poverty, the specific needs of poor men and poor women have to be addressed.

It was also important in the context of the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG number 3 which sets out to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.



What are the global objectives of the AU Commission for 2007?

1. Consolidate the institutional pillars
2. Build the human network
3. Forge a network of relations for the continent

In order to meet these global objectives the Commission set for itself 7 strategic objectives for the year 2007

- Establish an effective and responsive African Union
- Build consensus around a shared Vision and Agenda on the continent
- Promote the emergence of societies based on the principles of the rule of law, good governance and human security
- Promote regional economic cooperation as a foundation for irreversible integration on the continent
- Develop integrated infrastructure
- Address the structural causes of poverty and under development
- Enhance the dynamism of African culture and creativity

PARTNERSHIP

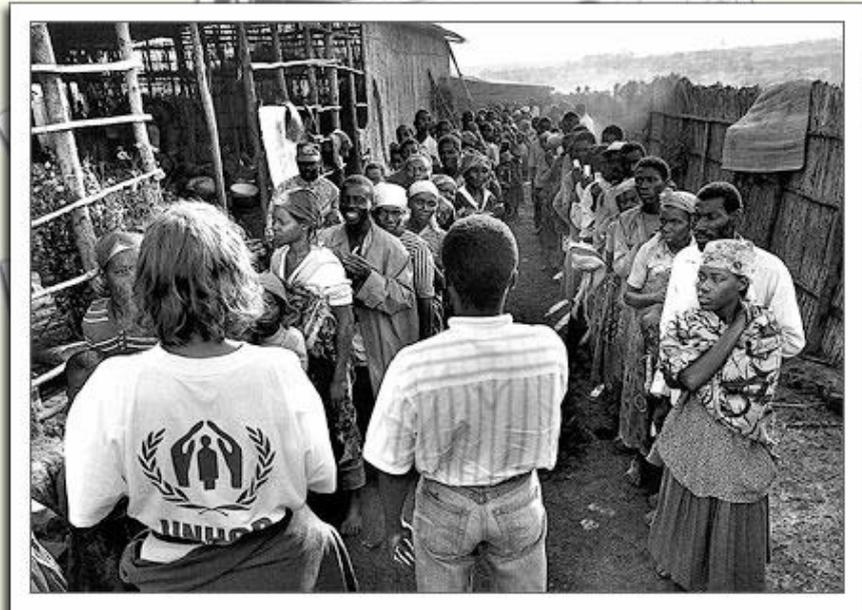
Since the early 1960's, the OAU and UNHCR, saw the need to coordinate their actions with regard to the protection of and assistance to refugees in Africa. The initial Cooperation Agreement of June 1969 was revised in April 2001, with areas of cooperation ranging from the search for durable solutions and addressing the root causes of population displacement, to sharing early warning information, capacity building, and promoting public awareness on forced displacement and statelessness.

September 1969 marked the signing of the *1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. The Convention, ratified by 48 African Member States, is considered as the most generous and comprehensive international legal instrument on the protection of refugees, and an effective regional complement to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees.

Likewise, UNHCR and the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, ACHPR signed an MOU in May 2003, to effectively promote and protect the rights of refugees under their respective mandates.

The collaboration between UNHCR and the AU takes various forms including information sharing, visits by Permanent Representatives of AU Member States to major refugee and IDP hosting countries, joint advocacy and resource mobilization, support for the implemen-

AU AND UNHCR



Africa is presently host to over 4 million refugees and more than 13 million IDPs

(Rwandese refugees in Mugano camp.
UNHCR/24270/A.Hollmann)

tation of international and AU legal instruments for protection of refugees, cooperation in strategic policy development and capacity building including the secondment of staff.

***The (1969) Convention,
Is considered as the most generous and comprehensive international legal instrument on the protection of refugees.***

UNHCR currently works with the AU in the following areas:

Cooperation in organizing the AU Ministerial Conference on Refugees, May/2006: The Conference would provide the AU, its Member

States, UNHCR

and other concerned actors, the first opportunity since the last OAU Ministerial Meeting held in Khartoum, December 1998, to take stock of the rapidly evolving situation on the continent in regard to forced population displacement. It would also review opportunities for durable solutions created by the concluded or on-going peace processes and major challenges, ensuring the sustainability of return.

Collaboration with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees: UNHCR and the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees collaborate on refugee issues, enabling them to develop common policies and
(continued on page 11)

JAPAN SIGNS \$2 MILLION AGREEMENT IN SUPPORT OF AU PROGRAMME IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

A 2 million dollar agreement was signed on 17 March 2006, in New York between Mr. Gilbert Fossoum Hougbo, of UNDP and Ambassador Toshio Ozawa, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, in support of a programme on the rehabilitation of ex child soldiers in the Great Lakes region: Burundi, Democratic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

This contribution is within the larger AU programme in support of its peace and security agenda, financed by UNDP and other partners i.e. Norway, Germany, Sweden, the Nether-

lands, United Kingdom, Canada and Spain.

The larger programme of the AU is aimed at enhancing the capacity of the AU for conflict prevention and peace building in Africa through strengthening the operational capacity of the Peace and Security Council and related institutions.

The agreement signed between UNDP and the Government of Japan (GoJ) aims at supporting a pilot project on the rehabilitation and re integration of child soldiers with special attention on the plight of girls in the selected countries of

the Great Lakes region (GLR) who are hosting the majority of the ex child soldiers in Africa.

The programme also aims at assisting the AU in providing political leadership to national governments in the GLR, the various international and local organizations who have put in place various programmes aimed at addressing the problem of ex child soldiers in their countries and eventually drawing attention towards the eradication of the phenomenon from the African Continent.

(continued from page 10)

follow-up their implementation. The PRC Sub-Committee annually sends a high-level delegation to the UNHCR Executive Committee meetings to present a common position on addressing refugee problems in the Continent. In addition, the PRC Sub-Committee regularly dispatches assessment missions to crisis areas. UNHCR supports such missions including through the provision of background information, logistical and administrative support.

Execution of the Comprehensive Implementation Plan: The CIP, considered as the road map for cooperation between the two organizations since the 2000 Conakry Experts Meeting, contains proposals for concrete measures to strengthen and enhance implementation of the 1969 OAU Convention, and to provide new impetus for support for refugees.

The AU Coordinating Committee on Assistance to Refugees,

CCAR: The Committee, which enjoys membership of AU Member States, NGOs and other partners working on refugee issues, provides advice and guidance to the AU on priority areas that require policy decisions and actions, and promotes the implementation of the CIP.

World Refugee Day: which started as Africa Refugee Day, is commemorated on June 20 every year. The occasion provides the AU, UNHCR and Member States an occasion to focus attention on the problems of refugees and other displaced persons in the Continent.

Refugee Resource Centre: UNHCR sponsors a section at the AU Resource Centre within the Political Affairs Department, with a wide range of reference material and documentation on refugees and displaced persons.

UNHCR also works closely with the AU on peace and security issues, particularly in regard to conflict prevention and post-

conflict recovery and reconstruction, to facilitate the sustained return and reintegration of displaced populations. Over half a million refugees in Africa have returned home in 2005. However, many challenges are faced to ensure their sustainable reintegration. Therefore, there is a need to focus on reintegration and rehabilitation, including bridging the gap between short term humanitarian assistance and long term development. The collaboration between the two institutions in this area includes cooperation in the development of the AU Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework, joint guidelines on field-level cooperation between AU operations and UNHCR's activities, a plan to develop a humanitarian framework for inclusion of the needs of refugees and other displaced persons in the continuum of peace processes, and support for the AU Continental Early Warning System.



Chairperson of AUC (center) with Ambassadors Cesar Castillo Ramirez of Peru, Richard Vella Laurenti of Malta and Antonio Malouf Gabriel of Guatemala
At left is Deputy Chairman Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka, and to the right is Mrs. Rosebud Kurwijila: Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture

SOWING THE SEEDS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION

Three more non African ambassadors present credentials

In a sign of the growing confidence of the international community in the African Union and in Africa as a continent, 3 ambassadors from non African countries presented their credentials to African Union Commission Chairperson Professor Alpha Oumar Konare at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 24 April, in the presence of the Commission's Vice President, Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka.

Ambassadors Cesar Castillo

Ramirez of Peru, Richard Vella Laurenti of Malta and Antonio Malouf Gabriel of Guatemala assured Professor Konare of their respective countries' willingness to deepen relations with the AU.

After receiving the ambassadors the AUC Chairperson thanked their countries for their desire to be accredited to the AU. "We appreciate this demonstration of interest and attention especially in these times when the AU is beginning to take off", he told the ambassadors.

Professor Konare informed the newly accredited ambassadors that the African Union is working hard to achieve the social, economic, political and cultural integration of Africa, which would eventually lead to a United States of Africa. He urged more cooperation between Africa and the three countries.

He said Africa is conscious of the many challenges she faces and also knows she has the means to solve them, but that international help is required

Turning to the potential that Africa offers to the world, Professor Konare said the continent will soon have 1 billion people. This will present a huge and young market for the world to trade with.

The credential presentation ceremony brought to 35, the total number of non African countries accredited to the African Union.

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AUC NEWS

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PO Box 3243

Roosevelt Street

Old Airport Area

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

Tel: 251 11 5517700

Chief Editor

Habiba Mejri- Cheikh
habibam@africa-union.org

Editor/ script/ lay out and design

Wynne Musabayana
musabayanaw@africa-union.org

Photography:

Engda Wassie
AUC NEWS is also available on
www.africa-union.org