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## Premier Calls for More Funding to Ease Health Problems

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Prime Minister Meles Zenawi called on international donors on Monday to substantially scale-up funding for Africa to deal with health problems affecting millions in the continent.

Speaking at the opening of the 56th World Health Organization's (WHO) Regional Committee for Africa which kicked off yesterday, Meles said the health condition in Africa was depressing for which, he said, increased funding was a matter of urgency.

"The magnitude of the challenge we face in the health area and the urgency with which the challenge needs to be addressed makes effective international cooperation indispensable and an imperative necessity," Meles said.

HIV/AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis, along with other infectious diseases continue to cause unacceptable level of suffering and mortality.

Meles said people whose health status continues to deteriorate could hardly provide the basis for economic revival which in the long run was the only way for making a sustainable progress in the health sector.

He also said "it is so critical that we accord the highest attention to this sector and ensure increased funding for the regularly work." "A rapid and accelerated reduction of the magnitude of the health problems facing our countries and achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the sector would need improved and effective partnership with Africa by the international community and a far more effective assistance to the continent." He said efforts by the Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative, the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and U.S. President George W. Bush's initiative for financing health programmes were commendable.

But he underlined that there was a lot to be done.

In his key note address, WHO Regional Director for Africa Dr. Luis G. Sambo said, it was high time that all countries built international partnership to address the health problems in Africa.

WHO Regional Director for Africa, reviewed the health challenges most African countries face and the development on the regions. He said WHO is critical to the health development in all regions in the area of HIV/AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis.

Sambo said WHO was working seriously to conduct a research on malaria with an outlay of 900 million dollars.

The week-long conference, in which ministers from 46 countries are participating, will discuss ways to boost HIV prevention, improving child survival, health financing and expanded immunization initiatives.

In attendance are over 600 participants including senior WHO officials such as the acting WHO Director-General, Dr Anders Nordstrom, representatives of UN Agencies, funds and programmes; and a number of bilateral, multilateral, Inter Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations and others.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region hardest hit by the AIDS epidemic, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the estimated 40 million people infected with HIV globally.

Experts say lack of funding and a shortage of health workers are major problems in fighting diseases in Africa.

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