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G8 LEADERS SUPPORT THE FUND AND CALL FOR GREATER ATTENTION TO NEEDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations, in a communique issued on 8 June, pledged to work with other donors to finance the Global Fund and to provide long-term predictable funding based on “ambitious but realistic demand-driven targets.” They made a particular call for the Fund to have a “gender-sensitive response” and to ensure that “greater attention and appropriate resources are allocated [to] the needs of women and girls.”

The G8 agreed to provide more than \$60 billion through the Fund, PEPFAR, and other channels to fight HIV/AIDS. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, “It’s a deal between Africa and the developed world, and just as we have recommitted ourselves to substantial increases in support and help, so Africa has recommitted itself to its responsibilities as part of a partnership – proper governance against corruption, proper democracy and so on.”

However, the \$60 billion to fight HIV/AIDS was not a firm pledge, and the communique stated only that the money would be given “over the coming years.” Bono, HIV/AIDS advocate and lead singer of U2, said, “\$60 billion sounds great, but that’s not earmarked for Africa, it’s a global figure and there’s no timeline. Even if their laudable commitment to put 5 million people on lifesaving drugs had a due date of 2010 – which it doesn’t – it would only be half their stated ambition of 2005. We are looking for accountable language and accountable numbers: we didn’t get them today.”

The G8 communique’s wording regarding the Global Fund was as follows:

“We recognize that the level of demand to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and

Malaria (GFATM) will increase substantially in the future as has been projected by the GFATM Board. In this regard, noting the conclusions of the April meeting of the GFATM Board, which estimated an additional demand approximately of US\$ 6 billion by 2010 which might possibly reach US\$ 8 billion, G8 members pledge to work with other donors to replenish the GFATM and to provide long-term predictable funding based on ambitious, but realistic demand-driven targets...

“Recognizing the growing feminization of the AIDS epidemic, the G8 in cooperation with partner governments support a gender-sensitive response by the GFATM, with the goal of ensuring that greater attention and appropriate resources are allocated by the Fund to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care that addresses the needs of women and girls. Coverage of prevention of mother to child transmission programs (PMTCT) currently stands at only 11%. In the overall context of scaling up towards the goal of universal access and strengthening of health systems we will contribute substantially with other donors to work towards the goal of providing universal coverage of PMTCT programs by 2010. The cost to reach this target, as estimated by UNICEF, is US\$ 1.5 billion. The G8 together with other donors will work towards meeting the needed resources for paediatric treatments in the context of universal access, at a cost of US\$ 1.8 billion till 2010, estimated by UNICEF. We will also scale up efforts to reduce the gaps, in the area of maternal and child health care and voluntary family planning, an estimated US\$ 1.5 billion.”

Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Fund, responded with a statement saying, “This is a strong G8 agreement that makes it possible to defeat the pandemics of AIDS, TB and malaria. The endorsement by the G8 leaders of \$6 to 8 billion per year for the Global Fund, a three-fold increase from the current level as part of their recommitment to universal access to treatment, is very good news.”

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