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Replenish or MDGs will perish

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Activists to call a Day of Action on Tuesday September 28 in at least 20 African cities, and supported by groups around the world, to fully fund the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Maternal health and child mortality Millennium Development Goals in many countries can only be met if AIDS, TB and malaria are addressed and the Global Fund replenished with $20 billion over the next two weeks, say activists. ?All countries should play their role. Contributions are needed from all governments, including lower-income countries, who have a duty to prioritise health. But the urgent priority right now is to replenish the Global Fund to put the world on track to meet the health MDGs,? said Paula Akugizibwe from the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA).

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Wednesday September 22 (Nairobi, Washington)--World leaders have two weeks left to find the $20billion the Global Fund needs to set the world on track to meet the Health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), activists said today at the start of a week of activism which culminates in a Global Day of Action next Tuesday September 28 to advocate for the replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

At the recently concluded MDG Summit in New York UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon declared that the MDGs are achievable, and called on donors to open their pockets at the Global Fund Replenishment meeting he is chairing 4-5 October.

?We are delighted that the world has woken up to the fact that efforts to tackle child mortality and maternal health (MDGs 4 and 5) are off-track ? but politicians are making a grave and foolish error if they think they can deal with this at the expense of the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria (MDG 6),? said Rachel Ong, Chair of the Global Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) and one of the initiators of the Global Fund replenishment campaign. ?Maternal health and child mortality goals have no place being pitted in competition with action to tackle AIDS, TB and malaria.?

In South Africa AIDS is the main cause of death among women and children, and throughout Africa AIDS, TB and malaria are killing millions of children and women every year.

?The choice is simple: replenish or the MDGs will perish,? said Vuyiseka Dubula, the HIV+ Secretary General of South Africa?s Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), one of the leading forces behind the Global Week of Action. ?If leaders have decided that maternal and child mortality are the problem, then they must know that finding $20billion for the Fund is a big part of the solution.?

In less than a decade the Global Fund has saved nearly 6 million lives and the organisation is highly regarded as a responsible steward of donor money, already proving itself capable of handling traditional aid and innovative financing.

?All countries should play their role. Contributions are needed from all governments, including lower-income countries, who have a duty to prioritise health. But the urgent priority right now is to replenish the Global Fund to put the world on track to meet the health MDGs,? said Paula Akugizibwe from the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA). ?The establishment of the Global Fund was an unprecedented show of unified political will to respond to pressing global health crises. If governments turn their backs on their own commitments now after all the progress that has been made, they are sending the clear message that they view health ? and hence, basic human development ? as optional, depending on the price tag.?

Ong Akugizibwe and Dubula are among a global coalition of activists who have convened a week of activism culminating in a Global Day of Action to demand that the Global Fund gets the funds it needs. The week of action started on Monday 20 September with marches in Paris, France and outside the UN MDG Summit in New York.

It culminates on Tuesday 28 September in dozens of marches, press conferences and other actions organised by community groups across the African region taking place in Kenya, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Mauritius, Tanzania, Mali, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Nigeria. At the same time a viral video campaign will be launched across 30 Asian countries, and supportive actions will take place in Canada, Italy, Russia and other places.

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More information on the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria can be found at www.theglobalfund.org

More information on the Global Week of Action can be found at
www.globalfundreplenishment.org

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