



## PRESS RELEASE

### Cooperation for the local manufacturing of pharmaceuticals in Africa intensifies

*African Union, UNAIDS, UNECA, UNIDO convene event with African finance ministers*

**GENEVA/ABUJA, 29 March 2014**—African leaders and key multilateral organizations are strengthening and broadening support for the local production of essential medicines on the continent. This was one of the key outcomes of the Seventh Joint African Union (AU) Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 25 to 30 March.

On the sidelines of the annual conferences, the AU, UNAIDS, UNECA and UNIDO held a high-level meeting, Local Manufacture of Pharmaceuticals: an Untapped Opportunity for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development in Africa, with African ministers of finance and economic planning. The event highlighted the opportunities for developing a high-quality pharmaceutical industry in Africa, which will bring important health and economic development benefits.

African Union Commission Deputy Chairperson, Erastus Mwencha stressed the benefits of the local production of medicines. “Local production of generic medicines promises affordability and availability of needed drugs, employment opportunities and overall public health benefits, including shortened supply chains, hence helping to reduce stock outs, as well as enhancing the capacity of local regulatory authorities to oversee the quality standards of essential medicines for their countries.”

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa business plan, the Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa and the AU Roadmap on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for AIDS, TB and Malaria Response in Africa have been endorsed by African Heads of State and Government as strategic continental frameworks for developing the pharmaceutical sector from both the public health and industrial development perspectives.

UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé welcomed the broader support from financial and industrial leaders for the local manufacture of medicines. “The time for Africa to break its dependency on foreign imports is now. The local manufacture of pharmaceuticals in Africa is an opportunity to develop a broader manufacturing and knowledge-based economy,” he said.

Mr Sidibé called for a major continental meeting before the end of 2014 on local production with ministers of finance, trade, industry and health, regional economic communities and the pharmaceutical industry.

Africa is the continent most affected by the AIDS epidemic, but remains hugely dependent on imported pharmaceutical and medical products. It is estimated that more than 80% of antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) medicines are imported from outside Africa. Local production of ARVs is vital to secure continued access to life-saving treatment for the 7.6 million people already accessing ARVs in Africa and the millions more, who still need access to treatment. Local production is important not only for the AIDS response, but for other existing and future health challenges faced by the continent.

UNECA Executive Secretary Carlos Lopes said “We must develop a business case if we want to convince African banks to invest in the pharmaceutical industry.”

The immense need for ARVs and other medicines presents a big market opportunity for pharmaceutical companies on the continent. Total pharmaceutical spending for the continent in 2012 was estimated at US\$ 18 billion and is expected to reach US\$ 45 billion by 2020.

The Director General of UNIDO, LI Yong, is committed to working in partnership with key continental stakeholders. “Together, we can develop the pharmaceutical industry in Africa; this will contribute to improved public health and will help alleviate human suffering. In line with our mandate to promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development, we will support efforts to enhance public health and enable populations to be increasingly economically productive through the development of viable high-quality industries in this important knowledge-intensive sector in Africa.”

The challenges the pharmaceutical industry faces in upgrading facilities and production practices in Africa include the requirement for large capital investments and the need for experts, specially trained workers, increased regulatory oversight and regulatory harmonization at the regional and continental levels in order to create bigger markets. However, there is growing consensus that strengthening the local production of essential medicines is a priority, along with advancing industrial development and moving the continent towards sustainability of treatment programmes for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, and improving access to safe and effective medicines to treat a broad range of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

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## **Contact**

African Union Commission | Wynne Musabayana | tel. +251 11 518 2555 | [MusabayanaW@africa-union.org](mailto:MusabayanaW@africa-union.org)

UNAIDS Geneva | Sakuya Oka | tel. +41 22 791 1552 | [okas@unaids.org](mailto:okas@unaids.org)

UNAIDS Dakar | Jeanne Seck | tel. +22 1 775 650 235 | [seckj@unaids.org](mailto:seckj@unaids.org)

UNECA Addis Ababa | Flavia Ba | tel. +251 11 544 3504 | [fmendesBa@uneca.org](mailto:fmendesBa@uneca.org)

UNIDO Vienna | Alastair West | tel. +43 1 26026 3882 | [a.west@unido.org](mailto:a.west@unido.org)

## **African Union**

The African Union spearheads Africa's development and integration in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens. The AU Vision is that of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena. Learn more at: <http://www.au.int/en>

## **UNAIDS**

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

## **UNECA**

ECA's mandate is to promote the economic and social development of its member States, foster intra-regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. ECA's policy work aims to shape Africa's transformation by supporting a growth path which addresses the vulnerabilities that impact on people's lives. ECA's strength derives from its role as the only UN agency mandated to operate at the regional and subregional levels to harness resources and bring them to bear on Africa's priorities.

## **UNIDO**

The mandate of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development in developing countries and economies in transition. In recent years, UNIDO has assumed an enhanced role in the global development agenda by focusing its activities on poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability. The Organization draws on four mutually reinforcing categories of services: technical cooperation, analytical and policy advisory services, standard setting and compliance, and a convening function for knowledge transfer and networking. UNIDO's vision is a world where economic development is inclusive and sustainable and economic progress is equitable.