



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific States

Directorate-General

Brussels, 31/08/2007
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Dear Prince Dr Philip C. Njemanze,

Thank you for your letter to the President of the European Commission dated 27th July 2007, sharing the concerns and conclusions of the participants of the Pro-Life conference on the theme "African Children Under Extinction", including a call for G8 members and other donors, as you write "to reverse their decision to 'tie aid to abortion'."

The development policies of the European Commission are guided by the European Consensus on Development, which was jointly agreed in 2005 by the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the European Union Member States meeting within the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Working with our African partner countries to eradicate poverty in the context of sustainable development, the European Commission is strongly committed to the principle of ownership of development strategies and programmes by partner countries. In accordance with its commitments made on Aid Effectiveness, the European Commission is actively pursuing and promoting further untying of aid, alignment and harmonization with partner country priorities and processes.

The European Commission is strongly committed to the goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, first set out in the ICPD Cairo Programme for Action, which was endorsed by all Member States of the European Union in 1994. In this context the European Commission supports the full Cairo Agenda, including § 8.25 of the ICPD Cairo Programme for Action:

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Chairman, African Anti-Abortion Coalition
Chidicon Medical Center
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"8.25. In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. All Governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family-planning services. Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counselling. Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process. In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe. In all cases, women should have access to quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion. Post-abortion counselling, education and family-planning services should be offered promptly, which will also help to avoid repeat abortions."

The European Commission also notes the reaffirmation, made by all EU Member States at the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations General Assembly, of the commitment to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Reiterated in the European Consensus on Development, the Summit Outcome also stressed the significance of this goal for the successful attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

In follow up, the European Commission works with partner countries on the full implementation of strategies to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and calls for a strong link between the fight against HIV/AIDS and support for reproductive and sexual rights.

In this context, the Maputo Plan of Action for the Operationalisation of the Continental Policy Framework Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights 2007-2010, endorsed by Ministers of health and delegates from 48 African countries, is considered a good platform for such cooperation based on partner country ownership.

The strong commitment and concern of the EU Member States regarding the need to invest in and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights was most recently expressed in the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, adopted 15 May 2007.

"The Council, recalling relevant international instruments, recognises women's rights to have control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health. The Council strongly reaffirms the linkage between HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) policies and services, and underlines that full access to them by women as set out in the ICPD/Cairo Declaration and Programme of Action (1994), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000), the 2000

UN Millennium Declaration, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS agreed at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in 2001, the Outcome Document from ICPD/Cairo + 10 (2004), the Declaration from Beijing + 10 (2005) the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS agreed at UNGASS+5 in 2006 and the 2005 World Summit Outcome is crucial for women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment."

In this context, we were pleased to note the attention to this issue at the recent G8 Summit in Heiligendamm on Growth and Responsibility in Africa, including the commitment of the G8 members to take concrete steps to work towards improving the link between HIV/AIDS activities and sexual and reproductive health and voluntary family planning programs.

I hope that these comments have helped to clarify the positions of the European Commission, and would like to thank you for your interest in our work.

Yours sincerely,

~~DIRECTOR GENERAL ABSENT~~

Stefano MANSERVISI
SIGNED BY:
DATE: