

Statement by the Delegation of Canada to the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Thursday, May 8 2008, 3:00pm – Sustainable Development in Africa: Health and Education

Mr./Madame Chairperson:

Health and education are two fundamental building blocks of sustainable development – that is why five of the eight Millennium Development Goals deal with these two subjects. Sub-Saharan Africa has some of the worst social development indicators in the world. All 21 countries ranked by the UN in 2007 as having Low Human Development are in SSA: life expectancy at birth is 47.2 years – 21 years less than the global average; on average, close to twice as many infants die at birth than in the rest of the world; and 20% fewer girls aged 15-24 are literate than in the rest of the world. More than 25 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa are living with HIV/AIDS.

There has been some remarkable progress in health and education in recent years: nowhere else in the world have more children been enrolled in primary school (an increase of 36% between 1999 and 2005); more girls are being educated on the continent than ever before (14 SSA countries achieved gender parity in education as of 2005); Tanzania's child mortality rate dropped 24% between 1999 and 2004, although the continent lags behind the rest of the world on this issue. With the exception of maternal mortality, each one of the MDG goals will be met in at least one Sub-Saharan African country, while progress will have been made in most others.

This progress is generally attributable to carefully designed programs and sound policies, backed by strong government leadership and effective support from the international community. Canada's programming in health and education is a combination of contributions to disease-specific initiatives and investments that support national health and education systems.

Canada is investing approximately half of its African development investments in health and education. At the 2006 G8 Summit Prime Minister Harper announced a 10-year (\$450 million) Canadian commitment to support African-led efforts to strengthen health systems and increase the number of front-line health workers in Africa. Canada is increasing bilateral funding for basic education in Africa, including girls education, to \$150 million annually by 2010-2011.

I would like to share with you some of our activities and lessons learned in sub-Saharan Africa in the areas of health and education:

- In seven countries,¹ CIDA supports national education programs through a combination of sector budget support and project initiatives. In Tanzania, Canada contributed \$71 million (2002-2006) to Tanzania's Primary Education Development Program, leading to: increased enrolment from 4.88 million in 2001 (65.5%) to 8.32 million in 2007 (or 97.3%); nearly the same number of girls and boys being enrolled

¹ Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania.

in school; the percentage of those who completed primary school rising from 62.1% to 77.7% from 2002 through 2006; success on the Primary School Leaving Exam improving from 27.1% in 2002 to 70.5% in 2006; and the transition rate to secondary education increasing from 21.7% in 2002 to 61.5% in 2006.

- Similarly through the Africa Health System Initiative, CIDA is supporting the implementation of national health sector strategic plans in Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This funding is enabling African countries to recruit, train and retain additional health workers at all levels of their health systems and to expand coverage of front-line health services for their populations.
- The Canadian-led Catalytic Initiative to Save a Million Lives is one of the main components of the Africa Health Systems Initiative. Canada is providing an initial CAN\$105 million over five years to UNICEF towards the initiative. Linking the strengthening of health systems with the delivery of cost-effective, life-saving interventions at the community level to reduce child and maternal mortality and morbidity the Initiative aims to save a million lives by substantially reducing death rates among children and pregnant women. To ensure sustainability, the Initiative will build developing countries' capacity to deliver cost-effective interventions and maximize results.
- Canada is a major contributor to health programs and consistently ranks among the top donors to global health initiatives such as: the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; the Micronutrient Initiative; and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization. All of these programs allocate significant portions of their funding to work in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Recognizing the disproportionate burden of disease on women and girls and the role of gender inequalities in the spread of disease, a focus on equality between women and men is explicitly and systematically integrated into all health and HIV/AIDS policies, programs and projects.