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## **Kenyans Rally at Major Health Conference, Call on Obama to Help Finish the Job on AIDS, TB & Malaria**

**Their message: “YES YOU CAN, President Obama  
Don’t be half-hearted with your future support.”**

**Nairobi** – Hundreds of Kenyans rallied at a major international malaria conference in Nairobi today to urge U.S. President Barack Obama to show leadership in the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The demonstrators, thanked the United States for its previous support in helping scale-up of treatment for these diseases — to the point that nearly half of all Africans who require treatment now can receive it — and called on Obama to help Africa finish the job.

Wearing t-shirts saying “Yes We Can— Help the Other Half,” the demonstrators promised to send thousands of cards and messages urging Obama to continue scaling up treatment for these diseases by significantly expanding investments in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and malaria.

“We believe that Barack Obama will not permit Africa’s struggle to control AIDS, TB and malaria to stop halfway,” said Lucy Chesire, TB advocacy advisor for the ACTION Project. “We haven’t fought this hard to protect the health of our friends, family, and community members only to forget the other half who are still ill and suffering. President Obama and the U.S. must join us in finishing the job. We need increased U.S. investment and partnership to get to the finish line.”

Overall, Kenya, Africa and low- and middle-income countries in general are nearly 50 percent of the way toward reaching the goal of treating cases of HIV, TB, and malaria among those who most urgently

require treatment. By comparison, at the end of 2003, 7 percent of people needing ARVs to treat HIV/AIDS were receiving them. Much of the success in scale-up of treatment and prevention is with programs supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Since 2003, worldwide the Global Fund has supported countries in providing 2.3 million people with ARVs, 5.4 million people with TB treatment, and delivered 74 million anti-malaria treatments.

However, donor governments' contributions to the Global Fund have not kept pace with the demand of high quality proposals aimed at making life-saving drugs available to everyone who needs them. Consequently, the Global Fund is facing a major funding gap next year, which must be filled if it is to continue its work to scale up and expand successful projects.

"The fight against AIDS, TB, and malaria has is teetering dangerously because of the global financial crisis," said Nelson Otwoma, national coordinator of the National Empowerment Network of People living with HIV in Kenya. "Countries are curtailing ARV scale-up and programs that have seen massive progress could grind to a halt. Barack Obama can help lead the world in setting its moral agenda, and ensuring we collectively go beyond rescuing bankers, brokers, corporate barons and investors to guaranteeing that all people needing medicines for AIDS, TB, and malaria can have access and survive."

Historically, when the U.S. takes the lead in increasing its contribution to the Global Fund, other donor countries follow. In the coming months, President Obama has the unique opportunity to take the lead in ensuring that Africa is able to take treatment levels past the halfway point and all the way to the finish line.

"Our programs to treat AIDS, TB, and malaria are working," said Allan Ragi, executive director of the Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium. "We're grateful for support that we have received from the United States, but we're asking President Obama to not flat-line U.S. contributions to global health now that we're seeing real success. Now, more than ever, is the time to scale-up contributions to the Global Fund."

Thousands of Kenyans will be sending postcards to President Obama thanking him for the United States' past leadership on health in Africa, but also urging him to fully fund the Global Fund and other health priorities so that life-saving progress continues. The reality is that without Obama's leadership, progress against the biggest killer diseases will be lost in the face of the economic crisis.

"As Kenyans, our connection to President Obama is undeniable," continued Dorothy Onyango executive director of Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya (WOFAK). "Our hope is that Obama will use his visionary leadership and 'Yes We Can' attitude to take the lead in increasing the United States' contribution to the Global Fund. Barack Obama has been here to Kenya, so he knows the reality that people's lives are at stake. The sad truth is that without leadership from Obama, Africans will have universal access to cell phones before those in need have life saving drugs. With an increased U.S. contribution, work will be continued to increase access to detection and treatment from this half-way point to 100 percent coverage."

"It is clear from those attending the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria, a conference that attracts more than 1,500 of the leading malaria researchers and health care professionals every three years that the global health community acknowledges the dramatic progress made in the fight against AIDS, TB, and malaria. Work, however, is still far from over. Now more than ever, as the world faces severe economic

uncertainty, the other half could easily be left behind.” concluded Edward Mwangi, Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya NGOs Alliance Against Malaria.

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### **Advocacy to Control Tuberculosis Internationally (ACTION)**

The ACTION project is an international partnership of advocates working to mobilize resources to treat and prevent the spread of tuberculosis (TB), a global disease that kills one person every 20 seconds. ACTION’s advocacy is premised on the belief that more rapid progress can be made against TB by mobilizing resources and building support for effective TB programming among policymakers and other opinion leaders in both high TB burden countries and donor countries.

ACTION is a project of AIDES (France), Avocats Pour la Santé dans le Monde (France), Global Health Advocates, Indian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium, RESULTS Canada, RESULTS Japan, RESULTS UK, and RESULTS Educational Fund ( U\$).

### **Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium**

Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO) is a premier national membership network of NGOs, CBOs and Faith Based Organizations, Private Sector, Research, and Learning Institutions involved or that have interest in HIV/AIDS and TB activities in Kenya.