

COALITION OF CSO NETWORKS IN HIV, TB AND MALARIA

STATEMENT BY COALITION OF CSO NETWORKS IN HIV, TB AND MALARIA ON THE LOCKUP OF GLOBAL FUND-DONATED HEALTH COMMODITIES AT TEMA PORT, DELIVERED ON MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024 AT CCM SECRETARIAT, ACCRA

We, the leadership of the Coalition of CSO Networks in HIV, TB and Malaria, wish to bring to the attention of the media, and the general public, our intention to present a petition to the Presidency and Parliament on the continued lockup of Global Fund-donated health commodities at Tema Port.

The commodities in reference, valued at more than US\$40 million dollars, have been wasting away at the port since May 2023. They comprise Antiretrovirals (ARV) for treatment of HIV, medications for treatment of TB, Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy (ACTs) for the treatment of Malaria, Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs), Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDTs) kits, and GeneXpert Cartridges among others.

The situation has currently created stockouts in health facilities across the country, leading to needless loss of lives and frustration for health workers. The essence of our intended action, therefore, is to draw the attention of the Presidency and Parliament to the looming public health emergency if no immediate actions are taken on the matter.

As a background, we would like to point out that Global Fund has since 2002 supported Ghana's national response against HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to the tune of more than US\$1.2 billion dollars. These funds are made available to the country in cycles of three years. For example, for Grant Cycle Six (GC6), which was implemented between 2021 and 2023, Global Fund supported the country with about US\$250 million dollars. For Grant Cycle Seven (GC7) which is to be implemented between 2024 and 2026, the Global Fund has earmarked about US\$248 million dollars for the country.

Between May and August 2023, Global Fund, as part of its commitment for GC6, shipped HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria commodities worth about US\$40

million dollars into the country. In line with regular practice, Global Fund made available US\$400,000 (being 1% of the value of the commodities) to cover procurement and supply management (PSM) costs.

However, at the time the commodities arrived, Government of Ghana informed Global Fund that the amount of US\$400,000 dollars will not be sufficient for the clearance due to increases in port charges. This was coupled with the fact that Parliament had failed to grant waivers for AU, ECOWAS and COVID-19 Recovery levies for.



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According to Government, the required amount in taxes, levies and port charges for the clearance of the commodities would be US\$3.6 million dollars. The Global Fund raised concerns about this amount and reminded Government that, as per the Framework Agreement between the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and Global Fund, they are not supposed to pay taxes and levies on commodities they donate freely to the country. They also pointed to their relations with other countries (where they do not pay such levies and taxes).

Regrettably, Government insisted on the payment and this is what led to the deadlock in the clearance process which has festered till date. As we speak, we are not sure of the storage conditions of the commodities. We are not sure whether these delicate commodities are being sheltered under the right temperatures or they are being exposed to the vagaries of the weather. Our greatest fears are that, if no action is taken now, by the time the medications are cleared, some may have either expired or may no longer be safe for human consumption.

In March 2024, a 12-member delegation from the Global Fund paid a working visit to the country to follow up on the locked up commodities. In spite of all their efforts, they did not make any headway and the commodities still remain uncleared at the ports. They have, therefore, indicated that Ghana risks losing all Global Fund support if Government fails to act on the matter. To start with, they have already suspended all commodity shipments to the country until the ones at the ports are cleared.

This development has very dire consequences for the hundreds of thousands of our compatriots whose daily survival depends on free medications donated by Global Fund. For example, there are presently more than 250,000 persons living with HIV whose ARVs are paid for by Global Fund. Secondly, this development is also bad news for the country's health sector because the Global Fund has recently announced its commitment to providing additional US\$100 million for health systems strengthening.



A second issue which, equally, requires urgent Government attention is Ghana's GC7 co-financing commitment. It is important to explain that the approach of Global Fund, in its support to countries, is to encourage domestic investments in health systems and also towards the three diseases in order to accelerate progress toward ending them as public health threats by 2030.

Consequently, as per the Framework Agreement, Ghana must commit to contributing 15% of the GC7 grant (US\$248 million), which translates to about US\$45 million, to shore up the support from Global Fund.

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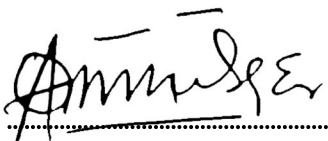
The agreement letter to this effect requires the signatures of the Ministers for Health and Finance and ought to have been submitted in May 2023 at the time the country was submitting the GC7 Funding Request. However, this letter has not been signed for the past one year and is now posing a threat to the disbursement of funds to the country.

In view of the above, we, the leadership of the CSO Networks whose area of operations mainly focus on HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria, plan to stage a MASS PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION to present a petition to the Presidency and Parliament for immediate action on these two critical issues.

We wish to use this medium to invite all CSO activists and all well-meaning Ghanaians, across the 16 regions of the country, to join us. The proposed date is Wednesday, April 17, 2024 and the convergence point is Obra Spot, Kwame Nkrumah Circle Interchange, at 7am. The proposed route is through Ako Adjei Interchange to Jubilee House and later to Parliament through Liberation Circle (Ridge Roundabout).

We count on your usual cooperation.

Thank you.



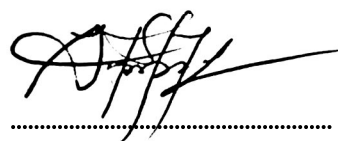
Ernest Amoabeng Ortsin

(Lead Convenor and President,
Ghana HIV and AIDS Network)



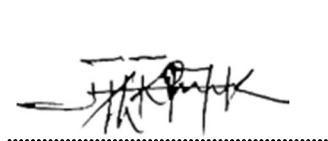
Elsie Ayeh (Mrs.)

(President, Network of Persons
Living with HIV)



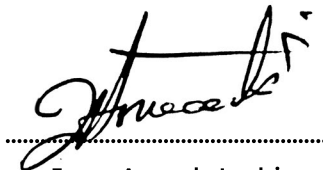
Bright Amissah-Nyarko

(National Chairman, Ghana Coalition
of NGOs in Health)



For Prof. Samuel Ato Duncan

(President, Ghana Coalition of
NGOs in Malaria)



Jerry Amoah-Larbi

(Executive Secretary, Ghana TB
Voice Network)



Eric Agbozo

(Board Chairman, Stop TB Partnership
Ghana)