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February 17, 2005

WISHH Conference: Bridging the Gap: Food and Nutrition as a Foundation for HIV/AIDS Response, *Panel III: the Industry Response to HIV in Africa*

Thank you for inviting me to speak on this panel today. I would like to briefly talk to you about the importance of private sector involvement in the fight against AIDS and then give you some background on the Corporate Council's HIV/AIDS Initiative and explain how we are assisting companies to address AIDS in the workplace.

Since our founding in 1993, The Corporate Council on Africa has been the leading American nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing trade and investment ties between the U.S. and the 53 countries of Africa. The 200 American companies that make up the CCA represent nearly 85 % of all U.S. private sector investment in the continent. CCA works closely with governments, multilateral groups and business to improve the African continent's trade and investment climate, and to raise the profile of Africa in the U.S. business community.

## **CCA HIV/AIDS Initiative Overview**

CCA and its member companies recognize that HIV/AIDS is a serious threat to the economic productivity and profitability of countries with high infection rates. The disease has the most damaging impact on the younger population, and the loss of trained and skilled workers in their prime has severe implications for business and development.

In 2003, CCA received a 3 year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to create a program focused on increasing corporate involvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The primary goal of the Initiative is to assist CCA members in the development and implementation of effective HIV/AIDS workplace policies and prevention, care and treatment programs for the company's employees in Africa and their dependents.

The broader goal of the Initiative is to better engage the private sector in a more comprehensive response to the pandemic in Africa and to enhance private sector contributions to national agendas on HIV/AIDS. On the

continent, CCA promotes private sector involvement in African national business coalitions on AIDS and encourages companies to take a greater leadership role in addressing the pandemic.

### **Why does business play such an important role in the fight against AIDS?**

First of all, business has good reason to be involved. In 2001, it was estimated that AIDS had reduced the labor force in Africa by as much as 20 percent. And it has been proven that the presence of AIDS in the workplace leads to increased business costs including:

- Lowered productivity
- Excessive absenteeism
- Increased labor turnover, including the loss of experienced personnel
- Greater recruitment, training and retraining costs
- Decline in worker morale
- Increased company health care and death benefits costs

As Peter Piot, Exc. Director of UNAIDS has said, The private sector, through its workforce, its ability to advocate at the highest levels of government, and its economic ties to those countries hardest-hit by

HIV/AIDS, has the unparalleled opportunity to change the course of the pandemic.

### **Why & How?**

The private sector can contribute resources outside of the traditional health infrastructure and workplaces have special attributes that make them particularly appropriate places to implement HIV/AIDS initiatives.

- Workforces represent the population most at risk for infection and transmission of the virus. And the day-in, day-out nature of the workplace makes it possible to reach these workers consistently with prevention, treatment and care services.
- These environments present opportunities to market by gender – textile: mostly women and mining – mostly men. Allows for highly targeted program efforts.

However, companies should not be expected to go it alone; private-private and public-private partnerships can enhance effectiveness and sustainability of programs and reduce costs. In addition, working with national, regional

and global business alliances can shorten learning curves and create local synergies.

### **Assisting CCA members: CCA's strategy**

At CCA, we embrace the concept of public-private partnerships in our work with business. One of CCA's greatest strengths is its ability to convene various types of international, non-profit, consulting, governmental and private sector organizations working in Africa, to assist companies in developing a unified and effective response to the epidemic. To this end, the Initiative has formed three types of partnerships:

1. The first series of partnerships is with established HIV/AIDS program providers/technical assistance providers that have experience working with the private sector on the ground in Africa; including: FHI, AED, Futures Group, JSI, PSI...
2. Potential funding sources: World Bank MAP Program, PEPFAR, Global Fund co-financing schemes...

3. Resource Dissemination Provider, AllAfrica Global Media, a CCA member. Together, CCA and AllAfrica Global Media have created an internet-based information databank of the most comprehensive HIV/AIDS information available. We have also re-launched CCA HIV/AIDS webpage, which provides users info about the work of the CCA HIV/AIDS Initiative, and relevant information and resources to assist corporations in addressing AIDS in the workplace.

As CCA's strength lies in brokering partnerships, the Initiative's role is to offer members access to these partners and resources, in order to leverage technical assistance and funding for the establishment and/or expansion of HIV/AIDS prevention education, care and treatment programs for their African workforce.

**Activities & Initiatives to date:**

Brief description of some of the activities the Initiative has worked on in the past year and a half as we seek to reach our goal to engage CCA members in the fight against AIDS.

1. Firstly, the Initiative concentrated on reaching CCA members already invested in HIV/AIDS programs or in the advanced stages of program development. We found about 20 out of 200 members to already be engaged in some type of AIDS programs in the workplace. We worked with the Futures Group to survey our membership to provide baseline data on the status of all members and their positions regarding HIV/AIDS prevention programs.
  
2. The most direct way we have sought to engage companies in the development of workplace policies has been through the brokering of partnerships between CCA members and technical assistance providers and international donors. To date we worked directly with AWF, Shell, Conoco-Philips and are currently in discussions with several other members.
  - I'll give you a quick example of how the brokering process works: Last year, a member from the oil and gas sector requested CCA to facilitate meetings between their senior corporate managers and the appropriate donor, technical assistance and support partners. CCA facilitated this series of

meetings, including the identification of key stakeholders and the arrangement for bringing strategic partners together. The result was a series of partnerships that is assisting the member in developing workplace prevention, care and treatment programs for their employees and associated communities. The member also benefited from two days of careful review, by key HIV/AIDS experts, on their strategic approach to HIV/AIDS.

3. Another of our key initiatives is a partnership with the World Bank, UNAIDS, WEF to work with the private sector in Anglophone and Francophone Africa to develop and strengthen national business coalitions against HIV/AIDS. CCA member involvement in these coalitions is beneficial as coalitions assist companies by facilitating information sharing; permitting economies of scale in the development of workplace AIDS products and services; and serving as a focal point for engaging with the public sector around this issue. CCA recently contributed to the publication of a guide for Building a Business Coalitions against AIDS. The tool kit provides practical, operational guidance to companies and/or leaders in the private sector who want to combine forces in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

4. We are currently in the process of planning the Applied Information Technology Forum on Healthcare Delivery, which will be an all-day meeting on Wednesday, March 9, in Washington, DC. The CCA HIV/AIDS Initiative, in collaboration with VOXIVA, BroadReach Healthcare, Development Gateway Foundation and Bridges.org, is planning to convene CCA members and our partners representing the communications and the digital and information technology industries to discuss the creation of new markets, the expansion of current markets, and innovative applications for existing technologies in the context of supporting healthcare infrastructure in Africa.

Our goal in bringing CCA ICT members together is to present the case for ICT investment in healthcare in Africa, examine case studies (what has worked, what hasn't and why), discuss potential solutions, and provide access to key partners and financial resources as member companies move forward in creating new markets for products and services.

5. We were pleased to be invited to speak on this panel, as CCA has started to work more closely with WISHH and the American Soybean Association to encourage CCA agricultural sector members to incorporate nutritional components into existing workplace and community prevention and treatment programs.

So, hopefully that gave you a little insight on the important role the private sector plays in fighting the epidemic, and how CCA can assist companies, through its role as a partnership broker and convener, to address HIV/AIDS issues in the workplace.

Thank you.