



European Union €10 million (US\$ 14 million) injection boosts Zimbabwe's Essential Medicines Support Programme

Harare, 12 September, 2011- The European Union (EU) today signed a grant for €10 million (US\$ 14 million) with UNICEF, in support of the *Essential Medicines Support Programme* in Zimbabwe. This contribution will improve the quality of life for the Zimbabwean population through the delivery of life saving health services to the poor and vulnerable members of society, which largely constitute women and children.

The ceremony was presided over by the Minister of Health and Child Welfare, Dr. Henry Madzorera; the European External Action Service (EEAS) Managing Director for Africa, Mr. Nicholas Westcott; and by the UNICEF Country Representative, Dr. Peter Salama.

This significant contribution will ensure that 80% of essential medicines are available through the procurement and distribution to existing primary and secondary healthcare facilities in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is recovering from a period that saw a deterioration of all basic social services, particularly the health sector. Women and children bore the brunt of this as was evidenced in the *Situational Analysis on the Status of Women and Children's Rights in Zimbabwe Report, 2005-2010*, which documented the marked increase in infant mortality rates mainly due to a lack of maternal and neo-natal care; and an increase in under five mortality due to AIDS and other preventable diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and measles.

Since 2008, the EU has extended its support to the Essential Medicines Support Programme through a multi donor fund that has managed to provide more than 80% of the country's annual medical and surgical needs. The contribution has significantly resulted in more than 80% of the primary health care facilities having more than 90% of the much needed essential medicines available. This virtually means that there are no stock outs of essential medicines in 2011, thus enabling Zimbabweans to enjoy the right to quality health care.

"We acknowledge and are grateful to the EU for its continued commitment to the People of Zimbabwe," said UNICEF Representative, Dr. Peter Salama. "To date, the EU has contributed 18 million Euro (US\$25.5 million) towards the Essential Medicines Support Programme. This will help in ensuring that the health related Millennium Development Goals are reached."

The Essential Medicines Support Programme also provides technical support to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, NatPharm, and The Directorate of Pharmacy Services, to enable effective and efficient oversight and management in the procurement, distribution and monitoring of essential medicines to health facilities.

"Our health delivery system is on the road to recovery," said the Minister of Health, Dr. Madzorera. "We hope that soon, every Zimbabwean will be able to exercise the basic human right of access to quality health care".

Over the years, the EU has made significant technical and financial contributions to the Government of Zimbabwe through UNICEF. In addition to other interventions, the EU contributed through UNICEF: US\$10.1 million towards the Education Transition Fund, which has re-invigorated the education sector; another US\$13.5 million towards the Programme of Support (PoS) for the National Action Plan I that saw increased access to basic social services for 527 000 orphans and vulnerable children; and US\$7.9 million to the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme towards the emergency response and risk reduction programmes; and rehabilitation of water and sewage systems.

"The EU pledges to continue to support the People of Zimbabwe," said the EEAS Managing Director for Africa, Dr. Westcott. "Since 2002, the European Commission and the Member States have provided over US\$ 1.5 billion to support the People of Zimbabwe and we intend to continue our support. We have just approved another allocation of € 30 million (US\$ 52 million), of which an important part will contribute to a further improvement of social services in Zimbabwe."

Background

The Essential Medicines Support Programme is a joint multi-donor collaboration with contributions from the EU, the United Kingdom and other donors. Since 2008, the EU has contributed US\$25.5 million while the United Kingdom Government has contributed US\$32, 9 million. Other contributors include the Governments of Australia, Canada and Ireland. The Programme was established in in 2008 in response to the critical shortage of vital and essential medicines in Zimbabwe's National Health System. As a result of partnerships between the Inclusive Government and donors, more families in Zimbabwe enjoy access to improved health care services.

For more information:

*Delegation of the European Union to Zimbabwe
EU House, 1 Norfolk Road, Mt. Pleasant Business Park
P.O. Box MP 620 Mt. Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel +263-4-338 158; Fax +263-4-338 165
Or*

*Micaela Marques de Sousa,
Chief of Communications
Tel 263 4703941/42, Mob +263 772124268, Email: mmarques@unicef.org*