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“The Fight Against the Traffic in Counterfeit Medicines ”

Oyo, the Republic of the Congo, 10 March 2017

Speech by the Director General of the Brazzaville Foundation

I too would like to thank the President of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Denis Sassou N'Guesso, for his warm welcome and for inviting us to the inauguration of this new hospital in Oyo. I wish to pay tribute to the determination of the Republic of the Congo to ensure that its citizens receive proper health care and its doctors and nurses enjoy the best possible working conditions.

As Director General of the Brazzaville Foundation, I am honoured to have this opportunity to speak to you about a major health crisis that is happening before our eyes, namely the suffering and the cost in human lives caused by the proliferation of counterfeit medicines throughout the world but especially in Africa.

Each year, the traffic in counterfeit medicines kills, directly or indirectly, one million individuals throughout the world as a result of using products which have been deliberately and fraudulently labelled. Far too many people, notably the poorest and most vulnerable, are being fooled into thinking that their illnesses are being treated when in reality these false drugs are dangerous, at best ineffective, at worst fatal.



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This illegal trade has expanded rapidly in recent years and now dominates the street and open air pharmacies. The WHO has stated that, of the one million deaths caused by malaria each year, 200,000 could have been saved if they had been treated with genuine rather than fraudulent medicines. In Africa, it is children who suffer most. In 2013, the International Institute of Research Against Counterfeit Medicines announced that more than 120,000 African children had lost their lives because of fake anti-malarial and other drugs.

According to the latest estimates by country, between 30 and 70 percent of all the drugs circulating on the Africa continent have been counterfeited, falsified or lack any therapeutic value. The huge profitability of the trade in counterfeit medicines, currently reckoned to be worth between 45-75 billion dollars per year, is attracting growing numbers of criminal organisations. The traffic in counterfeit medicines has become the second most important source of criminal income in the world. In the face of such extraordinary profitability, the limited sanctions currently available have little deterrent effect.

The current legal approach to dealing with counterfeit medicines is based primarily on the infringement of intellectual property rights. This limited juridical definition does not reflect the true extent of this rapidly growing problem and the grave threat it poses to public health. Worse, the lack of proper legislation is encouraging not only transnational criminal organisations, but also terrorist groups always on the lookout for new sources of finance.



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We now need to sound the alarm. African countries have already acted and many national and regional measures have been implemented. I commend in this regard the importance of the Medicrime Convention and the efforts of the Republic of Congo, which recently announced the creation of two administrative entities to respond to this crisis. I also salute the efforts of Togo, Rwanda and Guinea who have also taken tough action to counter this traffic. The thematic conference held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in October 2016 rightly called on measures of this kind to be strengthened.

But international efforts to deal with the crisis remain much too timid. Without strong support from the international community, the traffic in counterfeit medicines will continue to exact a heavy price on the health of populations of the countries most affected and ultimately put at risk their economic and social development.

The matter is now urgent. So today I announce the Brazzaville Foundation's commitment to work with African countries to ensure that the international community gives this scourge the priority it deserves.



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The Brazzaville foundation is committed to fight for much more effective international cooperation in four key areas:

- first, to establish a credible law enforcement system, including tough, new penalties for manufacturing and trading counterfeit medicines;
- second, to ensure the necessary resources are made available for much greater international police coordination aimed at pursuing and bringing to justice the criminals responsible for this trade, including increased efforts to dismantle supply chains and ensure an effective tracking system;
- third, to mount a major information campaign to alert the public to the grave dangers posed by counterfeit medicines, aimed in particular at women who are the heart of family life.
- And fourth, to promote a dialogue between governments and the pharmaceutical industry to find a solution for all those who are forced to buy fake medicines because they do not have the means to buy real ones.

The Brazzaville Foundation's aim is to help African countries to launch a political and media campaign to ensure that the international community treats the proliferation of counterfeit medicines as the major public health crisis it is and responds with the urgency it requires.

We wish to ensure that this issue becomes a high-level priority for the WHO, for Interpol and for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. We also believe that it should be inscribed an urgent issue on the agenda of the next session of the UN General Assembly.



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We are committed to fighting this scourge and we are counting on the cooperation of all our colleagues here today to ensure that together we meet this great challenge and put an end to this crime against humanity.

Thank you.