Distinguished Delegates,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Chairperson,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.
The African Group thanks the Secretary General for his report on “Future of the AIDS response: building on past achievements and accelerating progress to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030” and takes note of its recommendations.

Chairperson,

Today, we are gathered here to shape ways into how we can ensure that the global goal of ending AIDS as a public-health threat by 2030 is realized. It is important therefore, to assess the implementation of actions and investments that will be taken by the international community in the next five years towards this endeavor.
Chairperson,

The report of the Secretary General shows that the global HIV response has reached an important stage; new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths continue to decline in the sub-Saharan Africa. It is imperative to mention that the African Union states have taken significant measures at various levels including adopting the Road map on shared responsibility and global solidarity for AIDS, malaria and TB by AU Heads of State and Government in 2012. They have strengthened ownership, accountability and partnerships to accelerate progress to achieve clear deliverables under three pillars, namely, financing, access to medicines and enhanced governance, in order to help countries build long-term and sustainable solutions. In line with this policy and action, the AU Declaration of the special summit of July 2013 in Abuja, "Abuja actions toward the elimination of HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria in Africa by 2030" calls for accelerating antiretroviral treatment, eliminating mother to child transmission to HIV and strengthening preventive measures in order to reduce new HIV infections, furthermore, the commitment to allocate 15% to individual national AU state budget to health sector are clear
demonstrations of strong political will in Africa. In fact, Africa, in collaboration with its partners, has achieved considerable progress in creating awareness and in effecting mitigation of the pandemic amongst its population. Significant progress has also been made by Africa towards universal access to health care services in general and HIV and AIDS in particular. Despite this progress, the African Group is concerned that North Africa is experiencing a rise in HIV infections. The Group is of the view that there is a need to embark on the critical analysis on the cause of the rise in HIV infections so that necessary assistance and precautions are extended to this sub-region.

Chairperson,

The African Group takes note of the move by UNAIDS of launching new HIV treatment targets for the post-2015 era at the twentieth International AIDS Conference in 2014. The fast track, "90-90-90" targets, provides that by 2020: 90 per cent of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, 90 per cent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 90 per cent of
all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will achieve viral suppression. The Group also notes that meeting these targets will require significant strengthening of health systems; smart, focused investment in the interventions that have the highest impact; and increased access to tailored services for all those who are being left behind.

The Group therefore calls for the increased resources devoted to HIV and AIDS responses, stressing also the importance of complementary innovative sources of financing, in addition to traditional funding, including official development assistance to support national strategies, financing plans and multilateral efforts aimed at combating HIV and AIDS. The African Group further reaffirms the importance of guaranteeing access to affordable treatments, vaccines, medicines, traditional medicine and indigenous knowledge, and prioritize finding solutions that would make pharmaceutical industry license the production of HIV medicines to generic companies in the developing world, through intensifying coordination efforts
with WHO, WTO, and WIPO to Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for AIDS, provide affordable access to these vaccines and medicines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all, as well as technologies for the treatment, care and prevention of HIV and AIDS, including vaccines, medicines and Anti-retroviral Therapy (ART).

The group also calls for Substantial increase ODA allocation for health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of HIV

Chairperson,
The African Group is however, alarmed that until now, the AIDS response is failing young people. In some instances, not all pregnant women are accessing antiretroviral therapy and not all pregnant women are being offered HIV testing. Moreover, UNAIDS estimates that more than half of HIV transmission to infants in 2013 occurred during breastfeeding, which is now leading to more mother-to-child transmissions than those related to pregnancy and childbirth. Children exposed to or living with HIV is being left behind by services. In 2013, only 42 per cent of HIV-exposed children received early infant diagnostics within two months of birth and only up to one half of those who received diagnostic services received their test results. Furthermore, Children living with HIV are also not accessing treatment, with access to pediatric antiretroviral therapy regimens being far more limited than that for adults. Globally, only 24 per cent of children living with HIV, have access to treatment, compared with 38 per cent of adults. Issues related to the formulation of pediatric antiretroviral therapy regimens, such as finding the right dose and the right taste, still remain a challenge. The African Group therefore reaffirms and reiterates that prevention, diagnosis,
treatment, strong surveillance systems and universal access to services must be at the core of our efforts. In this regard, increased access to early infant and pediatric diagnosis and treatment, which will require strengthened health systems and mechanisms, should be given critical attention they deserve.

Chairperson,

The Group underscores that Universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment remains paramount in the global response strategies and constitutes a fundamental human right. The Group reiterates the importance of respecting regional, cultural and religious value system as well as peculiarities in considering human rights issues. The Group is disturbed by the continuous use of certain terms in the Secretary General’s report and it stresses the need to maintain joint ownership of the international human rights agenda and to consider human rights issues in an objective and non confrontational manner. It is of the African Group’s view that we should refrain from using notions that fall, outside the internationally agreed human rights framework taking
into account that such attempts constitute an expression of disregard for the universality of human rights.

Chairperson,

According to the Secretary General’s report; stigma and discrimination to people living with HIV and AIDS continue to prevail, the Group is concerned that these undermine effective AIDS response and people living with HIV continue to face challenges, in some countries, they are criminalized, denied health care services and family planning measures, in some cases, are forced to or coerced sterilization or abortion including facing gender based violence from their partners, while in others, they are being refused employment and punitive laws and practices undermine efforts to bring HIV treatment to all who need it. The Group strongly appeals and urges that people living with HIV and AIDS should be treated fairly and equally and should be protected from stigma, discriminatory practices and related intolerance.
Chairperson,

The Group believes that prevention should remain among the key elements in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Priority should continue to be given in the development of prevention programming including through the sensitization and campaign against risky behaviors and risk-taking sexual behaviors. In this context and although there is progress in reducing new HIV infections on people who inject drugs, the Group believes that while scaling up HIV treatment on people who inject drugs; more emphasize should be on efforts, such as; counseling and other means to encourage people to refrain from using drugs. In Africa, drug use and abuse remain a critical legal matter.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, the African Group reaffirms its commitment to fight HIV and AIDS scourge, the Group welcomes the medical research development and technological initiatives on the treatment and cure of HIV and AIDS that are accessible, affordable to all and are of good quality.
We believe that the HIV treatment for 15 million people target set by the Secretary General is achievable only if the significant current gains in HIV prevention and antiretroviral treatment are sustained including strengthening the treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The Group therefore calls upon its partners to support the Business Plan for the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Master Plan for Africa that has been developed in collaboration with partners and which was subsequently adopted by the Special Session of the 5th Conference of the African Union Ministers of Health in May 2012.

I thank you all for your attention.