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African Union, U.N. Launch Initiative To Prevent New HIV Cases in Africa

The [African Union](#) and the United Nations on Tuesday launched an initiative to reduce the number of new HIV cases on the continent, [Reuters/Yahoo! News](#) reports (Quinn, [Reuters/Yahoo! News](#), 4/11). In 2005, Africans accounted for 3.2 million of the five million new HIV cases globally, according to [UNAIDS](#) Regional Director Mark Stirling (Dlamini, [BuaNews](#), 4/11). The A.U. is seeking to prevent 29 million of the 45 million new HIV cases projected to occur by 2010 in Africa ([Reuters/Yahoo! News](#), 4/11). The initiative will rely on broad HIV education, peer education, communication campaigns, promoting consistent and proper use of condoms, and improving programs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV ([BuaNews](#), 4/11). It also will emphasize the need to provide more HIV testing ([Reuters/Yahoo! News](#), 4/11). The initiative officially was launched in four cities across the continent: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Johannesburg, South Africa; Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and Khartoum, Sudan ([ENA/Ethiopian Herald](#), 4/11). Speaking at the launch in Addis Ababa, A.U. Commission Chair Alpha Oumar Konare said Africa must take advantage of the "unprecedented political commitment and increased funding to translate plans and programs into services" that stem the spread of HIV ([Xinhua/People's Daily](#) [1], 4/11). South African Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang at a news conference in Johannesburg said that the initiative would give prevention "its rightful position as the mainstay of the global response to HIV and AIDS" ([Reuters/Yahoo! News](#), 4/11). The program is a follow-up to a decision made in 2005 by African leaders to proclaim 2006 as a "Year for Acceleration of HIV Prevention" on the continent, according to the [World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa](#) ([Xinhua/People's Daily](#)[1], 4/11). African leaders will discuss ways to implement the initiative when they meet in May in Abuja, Nigeria, to review progress made in fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases over the last five years ([Xinhua/People's Daily](#) [2], 4/11).