

MERROO STATEMENT

Monday 10 July 06

Statement from participants at the Pre-congress Conference on HIV, 9 – 11 July 2006 to the XIIIth Congress of the International Christian Medical and Dental Association 11-16th July 2006

Situation:

We the member bodies of the International Christian Medical & Dental Association (ICMDA) note with concern the severity of the HIV and AIDS epidemic throughout the world and the inadequate resources allocated to fight it.

Furthermore, we note with sadness the continued impact of the epidemic especially in vulnerable populations, including women and girls, the poor, commercial sex workers, intravenous drugs users, men who have sex with men.

Commendation:

We take note and commend the efforts currently being made by many governments, non government organizations, faith based organizations and churches, in a multisectoral collaborative approach within the framework of national and international strategies.

We recognize with appreciation the work in HIV and AIDS already being done by the medical and dental workers of the many national Christian Medical and Dental Fellowships and their members.

We welcome the many innovative responses and the leadership of Christians in addressing HIV and AIDS.

Challenge:

We commit ourselves to building capacity and taking appropriate action to respond to the epidemic.

We must address gender, cultural, social and economic practices and the poverty that increase the impact of HIV and AIDS in our societies.

We recognize the challenge to our churches and professions to engage their societies, to address stigma, widow and orphan care, social and economic support for people living with HIV and AIDS, etc.

Call to Action:

We continue to encourage all Christian health workers, services, institutions, local congregations and communities to engage holistically in HIV and AIDS advocacy, education, prevention, care and treatment. We support the call for universal access to prevention and treatment as part of a right to health and dignity for all.

We advocate for the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth and people living with HIV and AIDS. We will create an enabling environment and seek to work alongside these groups.

As members of the ICMDA, we will develop, strengthen and apply our medical and dental knowledge, skills and resources within a theology of health, justice and dignity. We commit to reduce stigma, discrimination, denial and silence.

We commit to review our actions in response to this declaration at future ICMDA International and Regional Congresses.

Our call to action is with a humble, repentant and prophetic spirit, learning with those who are already engaged. Scientific knowledge and good professional practice, together with prayer, networking and partnership will be central in our response to HIV and AIDS. Because all people are created in the image of God, we will demonstrate Christian love to the infected and affected, and affirm the dignity and human rights of all.