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Hasmy-AIDS

REDUCE PRICES OF HIV DRUGS IN POOR AIDS-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today urged wealthier developed countries to make available more resources to curb HIV/AIDS virus in the developing countries particularly in the affected African nations.

Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Datuk Hasmy Agam said many of the African countries, burdened with crippling debts, simply did not have the resources to carry out effective prevention programmes.

"They also cannot even provide treatment to their people infected by HIV since the drugs necessary for the treatment are very expensive," he told the UN Security Council during its discussions on the impact of AIDS on Peace and Security in Africa. The text of his speech was released here.

He said developed countries could and should play a major and constructive role by making available the necessary drugs to African countries.

"They should pressure their pharmaceutical companies to reduce the prices of these drugs or allow compulsory licensing of life-saving drugs," he said.

Hasmy said that at the recently-held International Congress on AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region in Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had drawn attention to the fact that compulsory licensing was allowed under the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

But regrettably certain countries had aligned themselves with the giant pharmaceutical companies thereby denying developing countries the right to produce cheaper drugs to save the lives of their people, Hasmy said.

He said while it was true that pharmaceutical companies had made heavy investments on research, they should not, however, try to recoup their costs and reap profits at the expense of the sufferings of the poor.

He said Dr Mahathir had said that the developed countries, with their unprecedented wealth, could do more to reduce the burden of the poor countries in this regard.

Hasmy also said that the first ever meeting on the international partnerships against HIV/AIDS in Africa held at the UN Headquarters in New York last December was a timely one.

"My delegation hoped that there should be a concrete follow-up action in the coming months and looked forward to an agreed plan of action expected to be finalised in May this year."

--BERNAMA

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