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US Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson (left) addresses Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH) employees after visiting the hospital's maternity wing in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Others in the picture are MNH CEO David Tragoning (centre) and Minister of Health Anna Abdallah. (Photo: Emmanuel Kwitema) Story on facing page

NATIONAL NEWS

US's pledge on HIV/Aids care

By Bilal Abdul-Aziz

THE visiting US Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson yesterday re-affirmed Washington's commitment to supporting HIV/Aids care in Tanzania.

Thompson made the promise during a brief tour of Muhimbili National Hospital in Dar es Salaam to get a firsthand view of health care management and infrastructure improvement initiative.

Under President

Bush's leadership, the United States is investing unprecedented time, energy and resources to the fight against AIDS," Thompson, who is in the country to chair the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria conference in Arusha, said.

He expressed satisfaction about the progress of implementation of the initiative dubbed Tanzania Care being undertaken through a public-private partnership between the Government of

Tanzania and the Abbott Fund of the U.S.

Emphasizing on the importance of the partnership, Secretary Thompson said: "This crisis is far too great for any one government to solve, and we need the help of the American business community."

He also applauded Abbott for innovative partnership with Dar es Salaam that was helping to provide modern hospitals and laboratories, trained medicine doctors and

nurses, and effective health care administration to the people all over the continent of Africa.

Earlier, Health Minister Anna Abdallah informed Thompson that Tanzania had been especially strained by the HIV/Aids pandemic.

"The modernisation of Muhimbili National Hospital and health centres throughout the country will allow us provide better care for Tanzanians living with HIV/Aids and other serious illnesses,"

Minister Abdallah said.

"Through shared expertise, resources and commitment to fighting HIV/Aids, the government's partnership with Abbott is already making a difference," she added.

Abbott Fund President Cathy Babington said Tanzania Care was a multi-year initiative that was focused on modernizing health care facilities and systems, and improving services and access to care for people living with HIV/

Aids throughout the country.

"Secretary Thompson has been a tireless advocate for public-private partnerships in the fight against HIV/Aids, and we're especially pleased that he is visiting Tanzania Care programme today," she said.

"Working in close partnership with the Government of Tanzania, in two years we have implemented a targeted and effective approach that has already resulted in great

access to testing and counseling for patients as well as training for health care professionals," Babington added.

To date Abbott and Abbott Fund have already invested over US\$16m in the Tanzania Care three-year program, which came into effect in 2001.

She mentioned key components of the programme including building of a modern, three-storey HIV/Aids outpatient treatment centre at MNH.

The new building is

expected to handle over 500 patients a day and is scheduled to open early next year.

Thompson visited the anti-retroviral treatment (ART) and Prevention of Mother to Child HIV Transmission (PMTCT) clinics.

Minister Abdallah, MNH Board of Trustees Chairman Abdulrahman Kinana and MNH Chief Executive Officer David Tregoning accompanied Secretary Thompson.

(related picture on facing page)