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## **ETHIOPIAN TEENAGER FORUM OUTCOME STATEMENT**

At the present moment, our world is affected by many problems. Among these, and perhaps the most significant one, is disease. In the past doctors were able to cure diseases. However, the modern scourge of AIDS has proved to be something beyond the capacity of doctors to cure.

There have been many meetings and scientific research conducted to try and stop this disease. However, we have not seen any change. Instead, as the years go by the situation keeps getting frighteningly worse with the numbers increasing with dramatic speed.

We are a group of teenagers who have come together from various Addis Ababa high schools to participate in this Ethiopian Teenager Forum held in Africa Hall to discuss how young people can bring about change, and how young lives can be saved. During our discussions, we have shared many ideas, and we have been able to learn a great deal from each other.

During our meeting we have first heard the testimonies of young people who have suffered as a result of HIV/AIDS, learning the circumstances that have exposed them to the disease, the problems that they have faced as a result within their communities and the society at large. They have also shared the strategies that they have used to overcome these problems.

Second, the weapons and ammunition that teenagers have to fight against this terrible AIDS are anti-AIDS Clubs, and young people have to do their utmost to protect themselves from this disease.

Third, we have also discussed that teenagers and society in general must take care of those who have become infected by HIV/AIDS, provide care and support for those who have become orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS and that we should not stigmatize and distance ourselves from them.

Following our discussions, we divided into groups and then came back together again to identify ten points regarding young people and HIV/AIDS.

The ten points are:

1. Free blood testing facilities must be made available to young people.

2. A youth forum exclusively on HIV/AIDS must be established.
3. Relations with people who have become victims of HIV/AIDS must be strengthened and care provided for those who are suffering.
4. Discussion and communication within the community and within families must become open, frank, and a lot stronger than they are at the moment.
5. Young people must be taught to abstain rather than to use condoms.
6. Illegal video houses showing pornography must be controlled.
7. Harmful practices such as marrying many wives, rape, etc. must end.
8. Recreational areas and places for young people to spend their time must be expanded.
9. Information about HIV/AIDS must be disseminated throughout the country.
10. Resource materials regarding HIV/AIDS must be developed and made available to young people and the public.

Finally, government should not always be planning but must put those plans into action. How can we act if we are always planning?

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