

Speech by Jaqueline Wendel (Gymnasium Schwertstraße, Solingen, Germany)

Honourable chair, fellow delegates, esteemed guests,

every six minutes people die because they are infected with HIV, Malaria or Tuberculosis, all in all 6 million people every year. These three diseases mostly occur in developing countries and have a severe impact on people's lives. Let me give you an example: In sub-Saharan Africa Malaria causes 3,000 deaths every single day. The majority of the victims are children under the age of 5 and the treatments cost low-income families 25 percent of their revenues. Moreover, this particular area is the most HIV affected region in the world, with 70% of the world's new infections and more than 24.5 million people living with HIV. The majority of them are of working age, but their illness prevents many of them to work, which aggravates their already hard lives and has a negative impact on the countries' economies. In addition, the money they earn is spent on their medication. Children stay at home to take care of their sick relatives and do not go to school, which makes it hard for them to find work when they are older. As thousands of children die as a result of these diseases the lack of work force will remain a problematic issue in the next decades. But what can be done to fight these diseases?

On a political level the European Union commits itself to a dialogue with the African governments to ensure that human rights are protected and that the parts of the population in need, such as orphans or refugees, are supported. Furthermore, the EU has invested in medical research to make medication more efficient and to lower its costs in order to make pharmaceutical products available for everyone.

On a more practical level the EU actively supports the two major preventive measures, which are to distribute mosquito nets and condoms and to educate people about HIV and Malaria. Often they are neither aware of the risks of unprotected sexual activities nor of the danger of mosquito bites. Both seem to have no immediate visible effects but have a deadly impact. By creating awareness of these diseases combined with the availability of preventive means the number of new infections could be reduced substantially within the next years.

As HIV and Malaria mostly occur in developing countries a lot of young people in countries like Germany are unaware of these diseases or they think they are safe from them. But there are people that are infected with HIV in every country of the world. In Germany for example there have been 3,400 new infections in 2012 and there are about 78,000 people living with HIV. Sure, this is nothing in comparison to 24.5 million people living with HIV in Africa but before my research on the issue, I didn't expect a number as high as this. Despite the small number of infected people in Germany, an initiative called "Don't give AIDS a chance" has started several campaigns to raise awareness by putting up placards in public. Sometimes ordinary things like a placard can create awareness simply because you recognize them.

As a young German – and a young European – I recognize all the measures that have already been taken and I see a certain progress, but I believe that there is still a lot that needs to be done. I think that literacy is the most important measure against HIV and Malaria and that improvements in early education and education in general are necessary, if not indispensable to eradicate the roots of HIV and Malaria.

Thank you very much for your attention.