Montreux, Switzerland - The Global Fund, leading a worldwide fight to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS infections and help reduce the burden of malaria and Tuberculosis, is impressed with the results obtained from African countries receiving funding to fight these diseases.

'The African countries have achieved good results. The mortality rates (death rate) are low, people with HIV/AIDS are living longer and the malaria incidences have been reduced in most countries,' Prof. Rifat Atun, the Strategy Director at the Global Fund, told PANA here Thursday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) symposium, organized here to discuss the health systems in poor countries, Atun said new programmes were urgently required to tackle the threat of TB and HIV/AIDS jointly, especially in Southern Africa to achieve better results.

The Global Fund has secured US$ 12 billion to fund the world's fight against HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB for the next three years.

The three diseases, most pervasive in Africa, were the principle reasons the Fund was created to push forward efforts to tackle the health crisis posed by the diseases.

The funds would be available for dispatch to needy countries, provided a national plan is drawn in consultation with local communities, interest groups and forwarded to the fund, which then puts those plans through what they call a transparent assessment before the release of funds.

'We encourage countries to develop programmes relevant to their national realities and send them to us for a transparent assessment. If these programmes are approved, we channel the funds directly to the interest groups,' Atun explained.

African nations are expected to receive the lion share of the current round of funding and he said out of the US$12 billion, two thirds of the amount, approximately US$7 billion, would go to
Atun, a professor of International Health Management at the Imperial Collage of London, said despite the progress made in most of Africa, problems over how to effectively win the war against HIV/AIDS and TB still remained in most of Southern Africa.

'We call for specific action for countries that request for funding to have joint HIV/AIDS and TB activities. There are many countries which have included these with good results.'

African countries such as Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia, are lauded for effectively tackling the threat of TB in their countries, while Tanzania and its island state, Zanzibar and Namibia are most successful African nations in the efforts to tackle malaria, another killer disease on the continent.

'For the treatment of TB, we are seeing good results in terms of expanded treatment in several countries,' Prof. Atun stated.

He said although the progress was visible within the African states receiving the funding, action was still needed to further improve the healthcare systems, especially in Southern Africa.

Montreux - Pana 19/11/2010