

Uganda lobbies on Aids drugs

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By Charles Wendo

THE Government is negotiating with multinational drug companies to effect the promised reductions in the prices of AIDS drugs, a Uganda AIDS commission official has said.

Prof. John Rwomushana, the senior programme officer, said on Monday that the pharmaceutical firms last week re-affirmed their commitment to reduce drug prices during a meeting attended by donors and UN agencies in Geneva, Switzerland.

Speaking to *The New Vision* during an AIDS workshop at the International Conference Centre in Kampala, Rwomushana said it was too early to tell when the new reductions would be effected.

"The companies have intentions to reduce drug prices but because of anti-trust laws, they cannot give a blanket figure jointly. The negotiation is

ongoing," he said.

He said the Government would negotiate with each of the drug companies separately for appropriate reductions.

Five multinationals in May announced that they were reducing the prices of AIDS drugs by as much as 80%. They include Glaxo-Wellcome of UK, Boehringer Ingelheim of Germany, Roche of Switzerland and two American companies Merck, Sharpe and Dome, and Bristol Myers Squibb.

The announcement came a day after President Bill Clinton announced that his Government would not block companies in developing countries wishing to produce cheaper versions of the AIDS drugs.

But doctors recently said that a month after the announcements by the pharmaceuticals, AIDS drug prices were instead rising in Uganda.



NEW: Mr. Peter Van Bruggen of Development and Relief Corporation unveils the first batch of medical equipment worth sh13b that his company is supplying to the health ministry at a warehouse along Jinja Road on Tuesday. Centre is Dr. Patrick Kadama, the commissioner of health.