Agency to promote female condom'

GENEVA. Friday. .

Fifteen African countries will

hold talks next week on boosting

use of the female condom' to

fight AIDS on the continent, ,a

United Nations agency said today.

"This meeting will determine

the way ahead for use of the fe*male condom in Africa," Dr El*hadj Sy of the Geneva-based UN

programme on AIDS (UNAIDS)

said in a statement

"The fact that Africans are

coming together to support the use

of the female condom is a sign of

their great concern about the spread of sexually transmitted

diseases and HIV/AIDS." ,

The talks will be held in Pretoria,

South Africa, from April 20-

22.

The agency said there was increasing

evidence that the sheath

provides women with an effective

barrier against the HIV virus that

causes Acquired Immune Deficiency

Syndrome (AIDS).

A UNA IDS-supported study of

sex workers in Thailand· last year'

found that the average incidence

of sexually-transmitted 'diseases

dropped by 34 per cent and the number of unprotected sex, acts

fell by 25 per cent when female'

condoms were made available.

Four million female condoms had

been sold in the developing world

this year, UNAIDS said. Worldwide,.

more than 18 million have'

been sold since coming on the

market in 1992.

The sole manufacturer is the

Female Health C9mpany of Chicago, Illinois. UNAIDS reached a

pricing agreement with the company

last year to sell the female

condom cheaply in the developing

world. (Reuters)