SADC urged

to order

compulsory

Aids testing

**LILONGWE, Monday**

Zimbabwe President Robert

Mugabe has proposed introduction

of compulsory HIV testing

in the SADC region as one way of

fighting the HIV/Aids pandemic.

Mr Mugabe suggested this in the

Malawi capital, Lilongwe, on Sunday

during a breakfast meeting of

Heads of State and Government

on Aids Watch Africa (AWA) on

the side-lines of the 33rd SADC

Summit.

He said if the region was to

make headway in the fight against

HIV and Aids, the matter ought to

be treated in the same way other

medical conditions, such as polio,

are treated.

“The problem is that when it

comes to HIV/Aids testing, issues

of freedom and rights come into

play and yet, we force people to

go for testing and vaccinations

for diseases such as polio,” said

Mugabe.

He said much as individual

freedom should be respected,

universal and compulsory testing

of HIV could be the most

viable way.

He further tipped member

states on how successfully his

country was fairing in mitigating

the impact of HIV and Aids

by introducing levies to support

families affected by the pandemic.

But Heads of States at the meeting

differed with Mugabe on the

idea of enforcement of compulsory

HIV testing saying it was

not feasible.

Among those who opposed

Mugabe’s idea was Botswana President

Ian Khama who proposed

the need for early interventions.

“Since the logistics of making

universal and compulsory testing

would be high, funds meant

for development would be diverted

towards funding the initiative,”

said Mr Khama. Democratic

Republic of Congo President

Joseph Kabila said there was

need for member states to consider

production of ARVs within

the region. *(Xinhua)*