

# Motsoaledi denies call for banning of formula

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HEALTH Minister Aaron Motsoaledi has this morning denied wanting a worldwide ban on infant formula, but he did stress that formula feeding should be the exception rather than the rule.

Motsoaledi was speaking on Talk Radio 702 this morning following controversial comments he made yesterday at the launch in Cape Town of a Human Sciences Research Council report on children and HIV.

In talking about infant feeding formulas, Motsoaledi said: "I think they must be banned altogether throughout the whole world."

He is also alleged to have said he might propose the idea during discussion of the millennium development goals at the World Health Assembly next week.

However on radio this morning Motsoaledi said infant formula can't be banned altogether as exceptional circumstances existed in which it had to be used.

He said breast milk was impor-

tant, but some mothers did not see it that way.

"It has been established that children, especially in poor rural areas, suffer a lot in terms of health because their mothers don't think breastfeeding is fashionable or hygienic.

"Infant formula should be used as an exception rather than the rule. Otherwise each child deserves breast milk," he said.

Motsoaledi also said studies had shown that if a child was put on breast milk for the first four months of its life, it had a higher survival rate. As it is, he said, there has been a ban on infant formula advertising by the World Health Organisation.

He felt it was "criminal" for pregnant women not to be given at least four months' maternity leave. With regards to HIV-positive women who might see the need to give their children formula instead of breastmilk, Motsoaledi said if a woman took ARVs early on in her pregnancy, there would be no need for her not to breastfeed.

