



UNAIDS/PCB(28)/11.6
9 May 2011

28th Meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
Geneva, Switzerland
21-23 June 2011

Support mechanisms for African States

Additional documents for this item: *none*

Action required at this meeting - the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to: give its comments on and take note of the contents of this report.

Cost implications for decisions: *none*

BACKGROUND

1. At the 23rd meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board in December 2008 the Board requested *“the UNAIDS Secretariat in consultation with the Global Fund Secretariat to provide, for the 24th PCB meeting, options to strengthen mechanisms to facilitate consultation and networking among African states to meaningfully participate in the PCB and the Board of the Global Fund with a view to its subsequent expansion to other regions”*.
2. In responding to this decision the UNAIDS Secretariat organised separate briefings on the work, policies and priorities of UNAIDS and The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) for the Group of African States at the offices of the Permanent Mission of the African Union in Geneva on 3 April (Global Fund) and 6 April (UNAIDS) 2009. A consultative meeting enabled the Group of African States to identify constraints and challenges in the current mechanisms and to agree a set of viable and creative solutions was convened by UNAIDS Secretariat, with substantive involvement of the Global Fund, on 8 April 2009.
3. As a result of these consultations a small working group comprised of the UNAIDS Secretariat and Mission representatives from Niger, Ethiopia, South Africa, Senegal, Zimbabwe and Morocco was established to prepare a draft paper for the Programme Coordinating Board including costing of the proposed options. This draft was circulated among the Group of African States principals for input and finalized for submission to the Programme Coordinating Board.
4. The UNAIDS Secretariat and the Group of African States then submitted a document to the 24th Programme Coordinating Board (UNAIDS/PCB(24)/09.10) in June 2009 which contained a number of costed proposals, such as: the establishment in the Secretariat of an independent communications focal point for the Group of African States; a series of regional consultation meetings per biennium; funding for an additional delegate for each African PCB Member; and the recruitment by the Secretariat of full-time English to French translators.
5. In considering the paper the Programme Coordinating Board did not endorse the proposals but instead made the following decisions:
 - 9.1 *Welcomes the effort and pilot initiative to strengthen the meaningful participation of African States in the Programme Coordinating Board and, to the extent possible the Board of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, including the establishment of an independent communications focal point, and notes the need for indicators to measure the successful implementation of these initiatives before consideration of extension to other regions;*
 - 9.2 *Recognizing that the Global Fund has its own process under way on this issue, requests the UNAIDS Secretariat to hold further discussions with the Global Fund to seek coherent approaches and possible cost savings and cost sharing;*
 - 9.3 *Requests UNAIDS, when piloting this in the African region, to seek ways of facilitating regional consultation meetings and to the extent possible rationalizing such meetings with ongoing health related meetings with a view to mitigating costs;*

9.4 Recognizes the necessity of language diversity and of providing Board related documents in languages other than English, particularly French in full respect of established UN procedures, and possibly in other languages dependent on logistical and financial feasibility;”

6. Shortly after the above discussion in the Programme Coordinating Board the Global Fund Board in November 2009 held its own discussion on enhanced support to States and agreed *“to further facilitate the engagement of the Board constituencies of the implementing voting group in the Global Fund’s governance processes, the Board decides to make available, on an annual basis, funds to these constituencies for communication, meeting, travel and staff costs incurred for intra-constituency functions, as specified in the Board Constituency Funding Policy (GF/B20/4 Annex 3). The Board decides that each implementing constituency application in accordance with paragraph 8 of GF/B20/4 Annex 3 should be limited to US\$ 80,000 for 2010. Exceptions to this ceiling may be permitted by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Strategy Committee, and within the overall funding ceiling approved by the Board.”*
7. Since the 24th Programme Coordinating Board meeting the UNAIDS Secretariat has attempted to organise two separate regional consultations to take the issue forward but these proved to be cost and scheduling prohibitive. The Programme Coordinating Board Task Force on SIE follow-up also discussed the matter and a further decision point was made at the 26th PCB meeting in response to the report of the Task Force: *“10.5b Capacity building and representation: provision, by the Secretariat, of greater support to delegations, especially African States (i.e. implementation of decision 9.1 of the 24th PCB)...”*.
8. In briefing the Africa Group (as is normal practice before each Programme Coordinating Board meeting – at the request of the rotating health coordinator in Geneva) on the Board item related to the Task Force report a suggestion was made that the Secretariat should focus its ongoing discussions with the five current African Board members, rather than the whole Group. This proposal was taken forward by the Secretariat and resulted in the consultation held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 1-3 November 2010, invitations to which were sent to the 5 African Programme Coordinating Board Members (Botswana, Congo, Ethiopia, Mauritania and Togo), the two incoming Board Members (Djibouti and Egypt) and the two African Global Fund Board members (Ghana and Kenya).

UNAIDS SUPPORT TO AFRICAN MEMBER STATES

9. Support currently includes:
 - Briefing meetings before every Programme Coordinating Board meeting for the Africa Group, held at the Office of the African Union in Geneva and organised via the rotating health coordinator;
 - Pre-Board briefings for all Permanent Missions in Geneva;
 - Support to bilingual Africa Group meetings during Programme Coordinating Boards (a room and interpretation services are provided free of charge);
 - UNAIDS funds the participation of one delegate per African Programme Coordinating Board Member to Board meetings; and
 - Support (travel costs) is provided for the participation of representatives of the Africa Group in working groups, task forces, etc as mandated by the Board.

10. Since October 2009 seven positions of Regional Support Advisor exist in the UNAIDS Secretariat in Geneva with three dedicated to the Africa region (Western and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa and the Middle East and North Africa respectively). These staff members provide vital links between Geneva, countries and RSTs, with the aim of strengthening national capacity and support engagement of their respective regions in the various UNAIDS governance mechanisms.

PRINCIPLES AND CHALLENGES FOR A SUPPORT MECHANISM

11. As part of discussions at the meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1-3 November 2010, the group revalidated a set of principles that had first been proposed and agreed during the consultations in April 2009, namely:
- that the Africa Group would take the leadership in determining the exact nature of the issues and needs to be addressed;
 - a fully participatory process was needed to ensure ownership of resulting solution(s) by the Group;
 - communications between permanent missions and capitals remain an issue for Member States;
 - issues of decision-making, establishment of national positions, composition of delegations and technical capabilities of individual delegations remain with Member States; and
 - that solutions must be sustainable financially and in terms of capacity.
12. In addition both meetings agreed a general set of challenges and constraints that a support mechanism would need to address, including:
- the lack of strategic interaction and dialogue between Global Fund and Programme Coordinating Board members of the Africa Group;
 - differing representational and constituency approaches use by the Global Fund and Programme Coordinating Boards;
 - that few Geneva Missions have dedicated health focal points with most staff holding large and diverse portfolios; and
 - that effective participation is constrained by language issues.

ELEMENTS FOR AN ENHANCED SUPPORT MECHANISM

13. Based on all of the above a paper was prepared for discussion at a UNAIDS-hosted meeting of the Africa Group in Geneva on 5 December 2010. The Group looked at a number of elements that may be considered as part of an enhanced support mechanism and concluded the following.

a. Constituency system for Board seats: decision 1995/223 of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) covers the distribution of the 22 seats on the Programme Coordinating Board to individual regions with 5 seats allocated to Africa. No other reference is made in any of the governance texts of the Organization on the issue of how these seats may be allocated i.e. it is entirely a matter for the Group if they wish to allocate a seat to a particular sub-region or group of countries. The election process for the Board is managed through the ECOSOC Secretariat in New York on the basis of applications from individual States. It is normal practice for regional groups of countries

to agree amongst themselves who will be elected to allow for decision by consensus. It would seem that the “health group” of African permanent missions in New York makes some attempt to ensure a fair geographical distribution across the five seats but this is not always possible and may result in a situation – as was the case this year – when one of the African seats was vacant for six months.

During the discussions in Ethiopia there was general support for an allocation of seats to sub-regions on the following basis:

- the diversity of languages, cultures and profiles of the AIDS epidemic across the Africa region necessitated a fair geographical representation on the Programme Coordinating Board;
- the Board member would have a smaller constituency thus making them arguably more accountable to, and representative of, those within the sub-region;
- the Board member would also be able to coordinate group positions more easily within a smaller constituency;
- countries would be able to plan for, and rotate, Board membership more efficiently if within a sub-region; and
- in addition to the ongoing practices mentioned above UNAIDS would be able to develop a more informal relationship with the smaller group of Board Members thus ensuring that information is more readily available and that the relationship becomes more of a dialogue than one-way briefings.

In conclusion the Africa Group found this to be an interesting proposal that should be taken forward internally under the leadership of the Group’s Health Coordinator and the African Union.

b. Participation in Programme Coordinating Board meetings: ongoing commitment by the UNAIDS Secretariat to the provision, as requested, of support for meetings of the Africa Group during PCB meetings including the provision of a room and interpretation facilities.

c. Models for coordination in Geneva: the model currently used by UNAIDS is to treat the Africa Group as a single constituency whereby all coordination activities are done with the Group as a whole. This process relies on formal invitations e.g. to brief the Group through the African Union. It is also sometimes difficult for missions with finite capacity to attend such briefings and turn-out can be low. However the Africa Group felt that the current model for coordination was appropriate and that a proposal to focus efforts on the five African Programme Coordinating Board Members, as a conduit to the wider Group, was not feasible.

d. Enhanced support at country and regional levels: even though the original Programme Coordinating Board decision point related to enhanced support to African States to enable their meaningful participation in the governance mechanisms of UNAIDS discussions have also highlighted opportunities for greater coordination at the country and regional levels. Examples that have been raised include:

- UNAIDS Country Offices (UCOs) to advocate for, and support the creation of, thematic groups/networks of technical experts at the national level, regular national conferences on AIDS, and the use of expanded UN Theme Groups on AIDS;
- UCOs to act as focal points for sharing of information coming from Geneva;
- better intra-regional sharing of best practice and lessons learned;

- performance evaluation of technical support; and
- support for the production of strengthened strategic information on the costs of national responses;

e. Language: the PCB Task Force on SIE follow-up including all aspects of governance presented its second report (UNAIDS/PCB(27)/10.20) to the 27th Programme Coordinating Board meeting in December 2010 which discussed the issue of languages. The Task Force - where the Africa Group was represented by Ethiopia - had found that the short-time span between Board meetings and the finite capacity of the Secretariat were limiting factors in the preparation and timely availability of Board documentation in English and French. This impacted the ability of delegations to prepare effectively for Board meetings: although a previous Programme Coordinating Board decision had requested that documents be available eight weeks before the respective meeting this was not always possible. The Task Force had agreed that Programme Coordinating Board decision points requesting the production of a report should contain realistic timelines for production in both working languages of fully consulted documents of the highest possible quality, that facilitate meaningful, timely and informed discussion in the Board. Such timelines should be agreed with input from the Secretariat, and with support from the drafting group if needed. The Africa Group, as part of the Programme Coordinating Board, supported these findings and all the recommendations contained in the Task Force were adopted by the Board.

14. In addition to the elements above the Secretariat has received multiple expressions of support - most notably voiced at the last Programme Coordinating Board meeting - for the continuation of expanded briefing meetings for the Group. A similar meeting was therefore organised for 2-3 May 2011 with invited participation from all African Permanent Missions in Geneva, the African Union and the Global Fund, and funded participation for one delegate from capital of each of the five African Programme Coordinating Board Members. The agenda for the meeting included briefings on a broad range of issues, including universal access reviews, gender and the Unified Budgets, Results and Accountability Framework 2012-2015, and provided an opportunity for the Group to discuss its position on issues looking forward to the Global Fund Board, Programme Coordinating Board and UN General Assembly Special Session on AIDS. Participation in the meeting fluctuated over the two days with a total of 12 Member States represented (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Lesotho, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Senegal and Togo). The cost of the meeting was US\$ 30,000.

SUPPORT TO OTHER REGIONAL GROUPS

15. Besides Africa four regional groups exist in the context of the Programme Coordinating Board: Western European and Others Group with seven Board seats, Asia and Pacific with five seats, Latin America and the Caribbean with three seats, and Eastern and Central Europe with two seats. Application of the elements described above to these other groups could be foreseen as follows:
- the Secretariat is ready to support regional group meetings during Programme Coordinating Board meetings and will continue to fund participation at Board meetings in line with the Programme Coordinating Board Modus Operandi;

- ongoing briefings by the Secretariat for all permanent missions, and direct follow-up with either regional coordinators or individual Board Members. Any and all requests for information are followed-up;
- the Secretariat is already implementing the suggestions of the Africa Group for all regions. In addition the Secretariat has created positions of Regional Support Adviser for the Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean regions for, *inter alia*, the provision of additional technical support; and
- expanded Group briefings could be organised for other regional groups, if funds were made available. However, they are time-consuming and would have to be shorter and less frequent.

16. The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to give its comments on the content of, and take note of, this report. It should be noted that any additional substantive decision points on further enhanced support to the Africa Group or any other region are likely to have significant financial implications. Therefore, the Programme Coordinating Board may wish to request the Secretariat to provide cost estimates for draft decisions prior to their consideration by the Board.

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