

Statement by the NGO Delegation on agenda item 2 UNAIDS revised operating model and UN80

Thank you, Chair. I speak on behalf of the NGO Delegation.

For nearly three decades, UNAIDS has provided the strategic direction, evidence, coordination and technical support that keep the HIV response coherent—linking governments, UN agencies and communities living with and affected by HIV, and championing human-rights-based policy. Uniquely within the UN system, UNAIDS has seated communities and civil society in its governance, so that people most affected help design, deliver and monitor the global HIV response. The report of the High Level Panel, endorsed at the last meeting of this board, has affirmed UNAIDS' continued role in setting the global vision, driving accountability through data, catalysing truly multisectoral partnerships and insisting that those left furthest behind are brought to the centre of decision-making.

Those roles and that architecture—and the decisions this Board has taken to endorse them—are now being tested by the Secretary-General's UN80 recommendations.

Communities are being asked to trust a reform process that has so far completely excluded us, and risks dismantling the very architecture that has enabled us to lead, hold systems to account, and keep the HIV response honest. We recognise that the current context requires reform to sustain the response, but reform is not the problem; **reform without safeguards is**. If the only UN programme dedicated to HIV is taken apart before there are clear custodians for leadership, data, targets and accountability, for robust guidance and safeguards that centre human rights, for properly resourced and institutionalised roles for community-led services and community-led monitoring, and for a functioning convening spine that connects the whole system, the response will fail.

For key and vulnerable populations, the Joint Programme is often the only doorway through which our voices enter policy—on legal environments, social contracting, and integrating HIV with the services that actually keep us alive. Remove that doorway without a guaranteed replacement and you break continuity of care, mute rights protection, and risk erasing key populations, leaving the most marginalized behind.

**We have long affirmed that communities are at the heart of the HIV response, and there is deep concern that UNAIDS would become the first and only UN body proposed for closure.** Since last week, more than 1,000 organisations from all regions have publicly endorsed maintaining UNAIDS beyond 2026. The NGO delegation has a clear mandate from those who signed our statement. We ask three specific things.

First, send a clear signal to the Secretary-General: no forced closure without safeguards; no sunseting in 2026. Uphold prior decisions by retaining agreed verbs—such as “reaffirms” and “reiterates”—and by supporting the Chair’s balanced proposal.

Second, call on the Secretary General to meaningfully engage with our delegation, consistent with the Joint Programme’s governance model, and to open the UN80 process to civil society and community-led organisations more broadly.

Finally, mandate a time-bound Continuity-of-Functions Plan—with indicative budgets, named custodians, and public reporting—covering data and targets; community-led responses; human rights and the legal environment at the heart of the response; effective convening and coordination; and people-centred integration across clinical and non-clinical settings.

If we intend to keep the promise that we have made to end AIDS, then we must protect the functions that make it possible, and listen to the voices of the people who make it real.

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Thank you chair,

I speak on behalf of the NGO delegation, but first I just want to begin by sending a warm embrace to all UNAIDS colleagues. We can imagine how heavy this moment feels after so many recent changes, and please note the NGO delegation stands in full solidarity with you.

Since the release of the Secretary-General's report, proposing to prematurely close UNAIDS, our Delegation has been working around the clock to respond and consult across our regions. That same afternoon, we issued a public statement, making clear that with the HIV response in crisis, following catastrophic cuts this year, this is not the moment to begin dismantling the Joint Programme..

As communities, we have been warning that this crisis will cost lives. Even within the first month of this crisis, pregnant women were reporting that they could not get the care they needed, and some had to give birth at home because clinics were closed. Nearly a third of recent mothers said they could not find formula to feed their babies. Data from Zimbabwe shows that the number of people who died from AIDS-related illnesses rose to 5932 in the first half of this year, after years of steady decline. Let's think about each of those people for a moment. Who they were. How they died. And now let's ask ourselves if this is really a good time for a sunset?

Communities do not think so. Our delegation's statement has already gathered more than one thousand signatures from civil society organisations and community groups, for whom our discussions are a matter of life and death, rather than diplomacy. The high number of sign ons shows the level of concern and how quickly communities come together when the future of the HIV response is at stake.

We are realistic about the financial and political environment. We know the pressures that the United Nations and Member States are facing and are aware of the broader reform process that is unfolding. We know that UNAIDS is not the only entity being discussed, and recognise the uncertainty many are feeling at this moment within your own agencies. Yet, as far as we are concerned, UNAIDS is the only UN body explicitly proposed for closure within UN80 - a process which has so far completely excluded people and communities living with and affected by HIV.

I want to close by acknowledging the many Member States and co-sponsoring agencies that have expressed their support for keeping UNAIDS and for the position of the NGO Delegation. Many of you have said that closing UNAIDS in 2026 would be premature, at a time when the HIV response needs stability, leadership, coordination and accountability, and when our voices, as people living with and affected by HIV, need to be heard, perhaps now more than ever.