

Statement

2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS

Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

A new and forward-looking Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS was adopted unanimously by UN Member States on 2 June at the close of the United Nations General Assembly 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS in New York (31 May – 2 June). Following intense negotiations on the text among Member States, the final 2006 Declaration provides a strong mandate that will help move the AIDS response forward, particularly with regards to scaling up towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. It reaffirms the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the goal to halt and begin to reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015.

The adoption of the new Declaration in the current difficult political environment of the UN marks real progress that underscores national and global commitment to tackle AIDS for the long-term. Now that UN Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to reversing the epidemic their words must be turned into real action on the ground.

Since the meeting, responses to the Declaration have been mixed. Many are encouraged by strong new language, but some UNAIDS partners have been disappointed that UN Member States did not go as far as they could to agree on clear new language regarding global targets and vulnerable groups, including injecting drug users, men who have sex with men, and sex workers.

The Political Declaration was a negotiated document between UN Member States. It acknowledges that not all targets in the 2001 Declaration have been met and moves the agenda forward on tough issues, including trade, the feminisation of the epidemic, resource needs, sexual and reproductive health and care and support for children.

Although UNAIDS recognizes that the Political Declaration includes areas that could have been stronger, it is noteworthy that Member States worked hard to put aside many political differences to reach unanimous agreement on some key issues associated with HIV. UNAIDS is confident that the AIDS response will benefit from this renewed commitment and mandate. Key actions towards helping ensure an invigorated response to AIDS agreed by Member States include:

- Calling for ambitious national targets, to be developed by countries by end 2006, as the world moves toward universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010 (interim targets developed for 2008).
- Pledging to provide the highest-level commitment to ensure that costed, inclusive, sustainable, credible and evidence-based national HIV/AIDS plans are funded and implemented with transparency, accountability and effectiveness, in line with national priorities;
- Recognizing the UNAIDS estimate that US\$ 20-23 billion will be required annually by 2010 to fund sufficiently scaled-up AIDS responses, and committing countries to reduce the current funding gap by making new resources available from domestic and international sources in a way that is more predictable, sustainable and aligned with national plans and strategies;

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- Emphasizing the need to strengthen policy and programme linkages and coordination between AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, national development plans and strategies, including poverty eradication strategies, and to address, where appropriate, the impact of AIDS on national development plans and strategies;
- Pledging to increase capacity of human resources for health, and committing additional resources to low- and middle-income countries for the development and implementation of alternative and simplified service delivery models and the expansion of community-level provision of comprehensive AIDS, health and other social services;
- Reaffirming the right to use agreed trade flexibilities (e.g. the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), and resolving to assist developing countries to employ these flexibilities;
- Committing to an intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and members of vulnerable groups, and to ensure their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular their access to comprehensive AIDS programmes;
- Pledging to eliminate gender inequalities, gender-based abuse and violence; to increase the capacities of women and girls to protect themselves from HIV infection, principally through the provision of health care and services, including sexual and reproductive health; to provide women full access to comprehensive information and education, interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and "life-long" antiretroviral therapy;
- Committing to address the rising rates of HIV infection among young people through the implementation of comprehensive, evidence-based prevention strategies that promote responsible sexual behaviour, including the use of condoms;
- Pledging to promote access to HIV/AIDS education, information, voluntary counselling and testing and related services, with full protection of confidentiality and informed consent, and to promote social and legal environments that are safe for voluntary disclosure of HIV status.

UNAIDS is disappointed the Declaration does not clearly address some of the root causes of HIV transmission – including work targeting injecting drug use, sex work and sex between men. It will continue to work hard to pursue this agenda, through the implementation of the 2005 policy position paper, *Intensifying HIV Prevention*.

Civil society participation

The High Level Meeting saw an unprecedented involvement of civil society with the participation of close to 1,000 representatives. The General Assembly President stated in his closing remarks that the UN had changed the way it does business thanks to the active engagement of civil society.

UNAIDS pays tribute to the hard work of civil society colleagues working in a complex and difficult environment to help drive the AIDS agenda forward with UN Member States.

UNAIDS will work closely with Member States, civil society, the private sector and others to make the money work for people on the ground. At the country level, UNAIDS country representatives will continue to support governments in establishing ambitious national targets on increasing access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Building on the strong participation of civil society at the High Level Meeting, UNAIDS will increase its engagement with civil society, including networks of people living with HIV, to

ensure that they are actively involved in target setting and monitoring and reporting on progress over the next five years. Countries must broaden their national AIDS responses to reach out to communities and protect the human rights of people living with HIV, women and children and those most vulnerable to HIV.

The next review of progress made in implementing the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS has been set for 2008.

The new Political Declaration marks a significant step forward in transforming the AIDS response, from short-term, crisis management tactics to a long-term strategic approach with improved planning, financing and, most importantly, implementation.

As the UN Secretary-General said in his closing remarks at the High Level Meeting, “AIDS is the greatest challenge of our generation.” And now our generation must respond urgently and with passion. The Secretary-General added that every President and Prime Minister, every parliamentarian and politician, must declare that “AIDS stops with me”. The fight against AIDS must be our personal priority until the epidemic is reversed.

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