

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS welcomes new UN Security Council resolution on HIV and preventing sexual violence in conflict

NEW YORK, 7 June 2011—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) welcomes a new United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution on HIV which has been adopted at the UN Security Council in New York. The resolution calls for increased efforts by UN Member States to address HIV in peacekeeping missions. It also calls for HIV prevention efforts among uniformed services to be aligned with efforts to end sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

"The Security Council has made major strides in addressing sexual violence in conflict. But rape is still a weapon of choice. This is an atrocious human rights violation and a public health threat," said United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. "I urge all Member States to link efforts to combat HIV with our campaigns against sexual violence and for the rights of women."

The resolution builds on the previous UN Security Council resolution 1308, which was adopted in 2000. The new resolution calls on the United Nations and UN Member States to bolster global and regional partnerships and integrate comprehensive HIV programmes into efforts to prevent conflict, ensure security and build peace.

"Global, national and personal insecurity undermine efforts to prevent new HIV infections and increase access to HIV services for both peacekeepers and civilians," said the President of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba. "This resolution will help to mitigate the impact of HIV among uniformed services and civilian populations affected by conflict and increase access to HIV services."

The resolution, which was tabled by Gabon, President of the Security Council for June 2011, recognises that HIV can have a uniquely devastating impact on all sectors and levels of society and that in conflict and post-conflict situations these impacts may be felt more profoundly. It also recognizes that conditions of violence and instability in conflict and post-conflict situations can exacerbate the spread of HIV because of displacement, conflict-related sexual violence and reduced access to HIV services.

Since the adoption of resolution 1308 in 2000, progress has been made in addressing HIV and security. About 60% of UN Member States have integrated HIV programmes for military, police and other uniformed personnel. However the quality of programmes is variable and resources to fund the programmes are often insufficient.

"Peacekeepers can play a leading role in HIV prevention as they secure peace around the world," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Uniformed personnel can act as agents of positive change, particularly in relation to preventing sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations."

Evidence shows that the threat AIDS poses to peace and security is far more nuanced than initially thought. Both the characteristics of conflict and the epidemic itself have evolved significantly over the past 10 years with sexual violence being increasingly used as a tactic of war. Addressing this requires a broadening and strengthening of HIV programmes for peacekeepers to ensure an effective response to HIV and sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

“Renewed commitment around the new agenda is needed to ensure that the AIDS response effectively contributes to all UN peacekeeping efforts to ensure security and promote and build peace,” said Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary General for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

During the UN Security Council session, both the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Executive Director of UNAIDS paid tribute to the late US Ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke, for championing resolution 1308. In 2000, Ambassador Holbrooke said, “Resolution 1308 should be well known and it should be fully implemented. It should not be the end of the process, but only a cornerstone for the future.”

Reinvigorated efforts around a new HIV security agenda will be instrumental in addressing the impact of AIDS on peace and security. UNAIDS will work with member states to scale-up access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for all uniformed services, including police, immigration, prison and the navy, to prevent HIV and end violence against women and girls.

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UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.