



UNAIDS ADVISORY GROUP (UAG)

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Summary Report

**24 May 2021
Online
1:30–3:00 p.m. CEST**

Acknowledgements

The UNAIDS Secretariat is grateful for the generous contributions from the Gates Foundation and the Open Society Foundations which are supporting the work of the UAG.

BACKGROUND

The objectives of the meeting of the UNAIDS Advisory Group (UAG) were to share information about the status of the preparations for the upcoming High-Level Meeting on AIDS (HLM) and to garner insights, feedback, and guidance from UAG members on how to leverage the HLM to support our collective efforts to confront inequalities and to end AIDS in every country and community.

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was opened by Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, UNAIDS, thanking UAG members for their support, reminding them that the HLM comes at a historic moment for the AIDS response, and inviting their ideas on how to strengthen efforts in the lead up to the HLM. An update on the negotiations of the Political Declaration was provided by Vinay Saldanha, followed by an overview of the HLM panel and side-events by Ninan Varughese, and communication objectives, along with top-line key messages, from Mahesh Mahalingam. The UAG then provided feedback and guidance as outlined below.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The HLM presents a unique **communication as well as a political opportunity** to regain momentum on HIV.
- **The UNAIDS secretariat needs to support, and advocate with, governments and help connect different parts of government**, including permanent missions in NY with ministries of foreign affairs in capitals with NACs, ministries of health, civil society and others that work on HIV, to align messages and garner progressive positions.
- **Young people need to be strongly represented across HLM panels** given the status of the HIV epidemic, with particular attention to ensuring that adolescent girls and young women from sub-Saharan Africa are well-represented.
- **Simplify and sharpen the communications messages for the HLM**, along the lines of: *“We missed the 2020 targets, we could get on track, here is what it looks like..., and the same things that are undermining the AIDS response are undermining the COVID response, but the things that are succeeding in the AIDS response are missing in the COVID response.”*
- **Articulate the lessons learned from the HIV response and the more recent bidirectional benefits of the HIV and COVID-19 responses** including how investments made in scientific research and development can spur quick results (e.g. how research towards a HIV vaccine spurred progress for a COVID-19 vaccine).
- **Explain how the complacency in-between the waves of COVID-19 mirrors that of HIV** and the consequences, including increased infections.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The HLM provides a unique opportunity to regain space, and enhance accountability, for the HIV response, within and beyond the global health agenda. Nevertheless, it is not the end point but rather a starting point.

The UAG decided to reconvene after the HLM to explore how to use the HLM as a springboard for action aimed at getting the HIV movement out and onto the wider political agenda with a view to using its knowledge and experiences to help leverage change on other health and development issues.

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