

# UNAIDS Executive Director's report

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Remarks by Michel Sidibé  
Executive Director of UNAIDS  
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Coordinating Board



Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this special session of the Programme Coordinating Board.

Allow me to reiterate the solidarity of UNAIDS with our wider United Nations family and with so many of our partners who lost colleagues in Ethiopia, with the government and people of New Zealand, who are responding to the tragedy there with love and compassion, with Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, which have suffered one of the worst weather-related catastrophes in the history of Africa, and with my own country, Mali, where we have lost entire villages to violence.

I would like to start by thanking the Chair, the Bureau and the members of the Programme Coordinating Board for organizing this special session in such a short period of time. And I would like to especially mention the Governance and Multilateral Affairs Department of UNAIDS, which is doing an extraordinary job under the leadership of Morten Ussing.

And let me thank all UNAIDS staff for their commitment. We would not have the organization we have today without their hard work and dedication. As United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed told us last week, "You all at UNAIDS are my heroes. You have brought the ambition that it can be done for people." And I want to extend a warm welcome to Shannon Hader, our new Deputy Executive Director, Programme. She has impressive programmatic, field, policy and political expertise. And let me thank again Tim Martineau, who did a critical and excellent job managing the double role of Director, Fast-Track Implementation, and Deputy Executive Director, Programme, these past nine months.

## The critical work of UNAIDS

UNAIDS is a young organization, created under extraordinary circumstances. Much of the focus of our work has been on saving lives by scaling up prevention services and access to treatment, controlling the epidemic, ensuring that no one is left behind in the AIDS response, leveraging civil society movements, governments and partners and increasing investment in the response to HIV. I am convinced that UNAIDS must continue to be a trendsetter. We must acknowledge the evolving landscape of the AIDS response, which is shifting more rapidly and more dramatically than at any other time in our history.

We know that there are other important priorities—climate change, people on the move, violence and terrorism. UNAIDS needs to continue to advocate for the people in need, recognizing that there are 15 million people waiting for treatment. UNAIDS needs to effectively leverage resources from the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to reach people in need of services.

We also need to reflect on how UNAIDS fits into wider health reform efforts. Universal health coverage is very important, but it cannot be just about coverage. It must be about impact, outcomes and results for people. And it must be inclusive, be people-centred and address stigma and discrimination.

United Nations reform is ongoing and, as a true partnership organization, UNAIDS needs to leverage and again position ourselves as a pathfinder and make United Nations reform effective for proper implementation and action at the country level. Sustainability is key and we must not lose perspective when we consider our programmatic and financing situation. We are demonstrating in many places that controlling the epidemic is possible. We cannot allow any backslide and we must continue to Fast-Track. And in the 54 countries with growing numbers of HIV infections among key populations, we must have the courage to put those issues in front of political leaders. In Namibia, Lesotho and Zimbabwe we can start to talk about epidemic control, but in other regions, for example in eastern Europe and central Asia, the number of new HIV infections is growing.





## A moment of opportunity

At UNAIDS, we are transforming a difficult moment into a moment of opportunity. We need to use this opportunity to make the organization stronger so we can continue our vital work. We have recognized and acted on the need for systemic change. We are going beyond recognizing the issue, to solving it. And I want to assure you that the Senior Management Team is committed to change, accountability and transparency.

Our Action Plan is transformative and will help us to create the model inclusive work environment that all of us at UNAIDS are committed to. This in turn will help us to be more effective as we work towards ending the AIDS epidemic, because ending the AIDS epidemic is as much about righting power imbalances as it is about health.

## Walking the talk on gender parity

Learning from our experience in the AIDS response, we have taken an inclusive approach, with staff at the centre. It is very important to me that all staff had an opportunity to contribute to shaping the Action Plan. I have said it before and I say it again—our staff are our greatest asset. You will hear more from Gunilla Carlsson, Deputy Executive Director, Management and Governance, on the steps we have taken to consult with staff.

We are well-positioned and have the right staff to oversee implementation of the Action Plan. Our two Deputy Executive Directors and our Director of Human Resources are women. Women comprise 75% of the Cabinet and over the past quarter the percentage of women in the Senior Management Team has moved from 36% to 45%. Forty-eight per cent of our UNAIDS country directors are women. And 55% of all our staff are women.

We are walking the talk on gender parity. I am very pleased that out of 198 global organizations reviewed in terms of gender equality policies and practices in the recent Global Health 50:50 report, UNAIDS is one of 17 high performers.

## The Action Plan as a pathfinder in the United Nations system

I want the Action Plan to be important for UNAIDS, but also to be a pathfinder in the United Nations system, influencing the larger debate. We must be a model for the wider United Nations family. I very much want the Action Plan to help us do that as we embrace the Secretary-General's United Nations reform agenda. System-wide, UNAIDS can be the pathfinder for:

- How we achieve diversity and inclusion.
- How we reach gender parity.
- How we protect and promote staff mental health and well-being.
- How we have strong systems of accountability.
- How we ensure a culture of human rights and gender equality.

All these things are necessary—they are critically important to our impact and achieving our goals. Let's not forget, we are a partnership organization and we have 11 other United Nations entities with us.

We are grateful to the members of the working group for their time and dedication to helping us be better. Thank you to Laurie Newell, from the United Nations Population Fund, for your leadership. The Action Plan has five action areas, which Ms Carlsson will describe in more detail.

- Staff at the centre—ensuring dignity at work, upholding duty of care and investing in staff well-being.
- Senior management—accountability and capacity-building.
- Systems—strength and transparency.
- Performance management and career development.
- Progress monitoring—the impact of change.

## Matching high ambition and meeting high expectations

We have high ambition and high expectations among staff and from you, our Board. I am convinced that with our positive, forward-looking partnership, the Programme Coordinating Board can help to define how a modern Board exercises oversight and leadership on these important issues.

The Action Plan is about strengthening UNAIDS today and for the future so we can continue our essential and life-saving work. So we can use our unique voice, our data and leadership to ensure that no one is left behind in the AIDS response. And so we can uphold the right to health for all.

Thank you.