



## UNAIDS PCB BUREAU MEETING

DATE: Monday, 6 September 2021

TIME: 10:30-11:30

VENUE: Virtual (TEAMS meeting)

### **PARTICIPANTS:**

PCB Bureau: Dr. Theo-Ben Kandetu and Ms. Xungileni Chitundu (Namibia: representing the Chair); Dr Walaiporn Patcharanarumol, Cha-aim Pachanee and Mr Natee Vichitsorasatra (Thailand: representing the Vice-Chair); Ms Tracy Carson and Ms Deana Jordan-Sullivan (United States of America: representing the Rapporteur); Mr Alexander Pastoors (representing the PCB NGO Delegation); and Mr Andy Seale and Mr Hywel Jones (WHO: representing UNAIDS Cosponsors).

UNAIDS Secretariat: Mr Efraim Gomez, Chief of Staff; Ms. Karen Schmidt-Juergens, Chief, Human Resources Legal & Policy; Mr Morten Ussing, Director, Governance and Multilateral Affairs; Ms Samia Lounnas, Senior Governance Advisor, Governance and Multilateral Affairs; Ms Pauliina Nykanen-Rettaroli, Governance Advisor, Governance and Multilateral Affairs; and Ms Maggie Lemons, Governance Officer, Governance and Multilateral Affairs

### **PCB Bureau Meeting Agenda**

- 1. Update on investigation:** *The Bureau will receive an update on a recently closed OIOS investigation.*
  - 2. Any other business**
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### **Summary**

The PCB Chair representative, Theo-Ben Kandetu, welcomed members of the Bureau and introduced himself. Thanking the previous representative, Xungileni Chitundu, who had chaired the Bureau for the first half of 2021, Dr Kandetu noted that he looked forward to working closely with the Bureau members for the remainder of the Chair's term.

#### **1. Update on investigation**

The Chair welcomed Efraim Gomez, UNAIDS Chief of Staff, to provide the update on a recently closed OIOS investigation on behalf of the Secretariat. Stressing the importance of transparency and openness, Mr Gomez noted that the Secretariat was bound by confidentiality and therefore

prevented from discussing specific details of individual cases but was committed to reporting back to staff and to the Board on this matter in respect of related institutional action. Staff had been informed during a townhall as well as via email. The PCB Chair had been briefed prior to the meeting of the PCB Bureau.

It was recalled that the matter had been the subject of a WHO IOS investigation previously, before being referred to OIOS in 2018. OIOS concluded their investigation in August 2020 and referred the findings to WHO. In 2021, the decision making authority was delegated back to UNAIDS and the Executive Director issued final decisions to close the case during the first week of September 2021.

Mr Gomez explained that the Secretariat approached all misconduct investigations and reports from three primary objectives: seeking justice, finding closure, and learning from such situations. The Executive Director was committed to ensuring an environment of zero tolerance for discrimination and misconduct, and was encouraged by progress made, with the support of the PCB and other stakeholders, since the recently closed cases had been filed.

While specific details could not be shared to protect the integrity and confidentiality of the process, the Secretariat noted that the report had found that a senior staff member of UNAIDS had failed to observe the standards of conduct required from an international civil servant and that this behaviour had been seemingly tolerated by UNAIDS senior leadership. All staff members involved in the case were no longer employed at UNAIDS, which limited redress options regarding specific personnel. However, the Secretariat noted that the report findings had also included observations on institutional aspects, and those were being addressed to ensure an enabling and safe working environment for all staff, further strengthen a culture of no-tolerance, as well as the relevant mechanisms of the internal justice system. Many of these recommendations had already been taken forward and addressed as part of the ongoing culture transformation initiatives, including the Management Action Plan.

The Executive Director accepted the findings of the report and was committed to strengthening redress measures and to continuing the ongoing work of cultural transformation. The Secretariat thanked the PCB for its support and engagement on cultural transformation initiatives, whether policies, practices, tools or behavioural change, over the course of the last two years. Lessons learned from this case included the need for strengthened capacity in investigation mechanisms (the Secretariat is in the process of signing an MOU with WHO IOS on this issue) and amplifying awareness campaigns to ensure that colleagues are aware of what constitutes misconduct and the options for preventing and addressing such behaviour. For instance, the Secretariat noted that, the following week, a campaign around the new policy to prevent abusive conduct (as adopted in March 2021) and a range of implementation dialogues would be launched. The Secretariat noted that management was working closely and positively with the staff association on these efforts.

The Secretariat stressed the importance of supporting staff and noted plans to continue having reflection spaces to help concerned staff find closure. The PCB would also receive UNAIDS' annual reports on disciplinary and corrective action taken over the course of the preceding year and on administrative reviews and the internal justice system in June 2022.

Bureau members thanked the Secretariat for the update and commended the work of the Secretariat to support a culture of no-tolerance for discrimination and misconduct, including the significant measures taken in the last three years. The Bureau stressed the importance of ensuring that the case closure was communicated to relevant PCB stakeholders, recognizing the important boundaries of confidentiality. A communication or briefing for PCB stakeholders was suggested.

The upcoming PCB Special Session would also provide an opportunity to give a brief update to the PCB on the matter.

## **2. AOB**

The Secretariat reminded the Bureau that a call for themes for the upcoming year's thematic segments had been launched in July. The deadline to submit a proposal for a theme was Friday, 17 September. A reminder would be sent to all PCB stakeholders.

The Chair noted that the Bureau would re-convene shortly to finalize preparations for the upcoming Special Session of the PCB to be held on Wednesday, 6 October 2021. The Chair closed the meeting by thanking participants for their time and engagement.

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