

THE OPEC FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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OPEC FUND *HIV/AIDS Program*

OPEC Fund/UNAIDS Global Initiative on HIV/AIDS Signature Ceremony

Statement at the Ceremony
by
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Director-General
OPEC Fund

UNAIDS Headquarters, Geneva
Friday, May 07, 2004

Dr. Peter Piot;
Members of Staff of UNAIDS;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to begin with thanks to my colleague, Dr. Piot, and his able staff. I should thank the Executive Director and Under Secretary-General for his distinguished leadership of the international battle against HIV/AIDS and for the arrangements he was able to make so that we could both accommodate this signature ceremony today, in spite of our busy schedules. I also thank the staff of UNAIDS, who worked to design the project we are signing.

At the OPEC Fund for International Development, we see UNAIDS as the world's spokesman and premier advocate for global action against HIV/AIDS. Indeed, UNAIDS actually introduced the OPEC Fund to the community of partner-organizations involved in the campaign against HIV/AIDS. All of the projects and programs we have on-going saw some input from UNAIDS. But the present Initiative marks the first time we are working directly with UNAIDS. The OPEC Fund is of the opinion that working directly with UNAIDS should help to further demonstrate the Fund's commitment and ensure that we reach the people in need of support.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Because today, as I said, is for all of us a busy day, I intend to be brief. As you are all fully aware, the OPEC Fund remains committed to the *global campaign against HIV/AIDS*. We have, since 2001, been working with several lead agencies to contribute what we can to containing this disease. The OPEC Fund is not a humanitarian assistance agency, as such. We are, properly, a development finance institution, funding long-term development projects and programs. The Fund also extends grant assistance to initiatives which, otherwise, would not qualify for loan financing and would, thus, remain unfunded. We got involved in HIV/AIDS interventions in the conviction

that the international community needed to join forces to fight a disease that could roll back hard-won development gains.

The OPEC Fund is supporting interventions against HIV/AIDS through a *Special Grant Account*. The Account was initially endowed with 15 million dollars, and was replenished only last June with a similar amount.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As the world prepares for the third decade of the AIDS epidemic, the evidence of its impact is undeniable: The disease is depriving countries of the resources and capacities on which human security and development depend. Intervention-related activities must become an integral part of development.

Under the *OPEC Fund/UNAIDS Global Initiative*, various regions of the world will benefit: the Middle East; North Africa; Asia-Pacific; Latin America; and the Caribbean. Fourteen countries are directly earmarked*; with regional activities touching neighboring countries.

Essentially, the Initiative will aim at building capacity; strengthening leadership; increasing awareness; and promoting

* Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Mali, Mauritania and Tunisia (*Middle East and North Africa Region*); Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand (*Asia Pacific Region*); Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and Nicaragua (*Latin America and Caribbean Region*).

partnerships. There will be greater involvement of *People living with HIV/AIDS*. Also planned are training workshops; access to VCT services** ; and various support measures.

At the close of the Initiative, several outcomes are expected. These would include:

- reduced transmission of HIV within project areas;
- greater access to prevention, care and support mechanisms;
- increased involvement of the leadership; and
- strengthened national AIDS response.

We expect implementation to take two years, running from June, 2004, until July 2006.

Again, Dr. Piot, I thank you and your staff very much - for your dedication to this important task; for your outreach to the OPEC Fund; and for the considerable effort which I know will be channeled into making this Initiative a success. Thank you.

Ends.

** Voluntary Counselling and Testing.