

Recommendations of the Meeting of the Coordination Council on HIV-infection problems of the CIS Member-States

Better Access to Quality Antiretroviral Drugs at Affordable Prices in the CIS States. 24-25 February, 2005, Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

The participants, having considered and discussed the problems of improving access to quality antiretroviral drugs at affordable prices in the CIS countries, noted that the current epidemiological situation in the region is characterized by the continuing spread of HIV and a rapid growth of the number of people in need of modern highly active antiretroviral therapy. Situation analysis conducted both by national and international experts has demonstrated that access to antiretroviral therapy in the countries of the region is very limited, and in some cases is non-existent. The current situation, with over one million people affected by the epidemic in the region (according to WHO and UNAIDS estimates), represents a real threat to the social and economic development of the countries and to their national security.

In view of the above, the meeting participants agree that the following issues should be brought to the attention of the executive and legislative authorities of their countries.

1. Commitment at the highest political level is necessary to ensure free and universal access to antiretroviral therapy, as well as adequate and continuous funding for procurement of these necessary drugs.
2. It is necessary to develop and adopt national policies on improving access to antiretroviral drugs, and to mainstream provision of them into the public health systems, encouraging pursuit of price reduction strategies in the following main areas:
 - development and approval by the CIS countries of guiding principles and treatment protocols, taking into account the standard protocols developed by WHO for CIS countries;
 - accelerated registration on preferential terms of WHO-prequalified antiretrovirals;
 - joint negotiations on antiretroviral drug prices and possible joint procurement of antiretrovirals;
 - exemption or reduction of taxes and duties for antiretrovirals;
 - procurement of duly registered generic antiretrovirals;
 - review and enforcement of patent laws to improve access to, and increase the range of generic antiretrovirals; and
 - review and use the opportunities for domestic manufacturing of antiretrovirals.

The meeting participants supported strengthening the regional approaches to HIV and AIDS issues in order to improve access to antiretrovirals, and suggested the establishment of a Working Group under the Coordination Council to develop a draft agreement on mutual recognition of licensing documents for antiretrovirals in the CIS countries.

In view of the term of the *Programme of Urgent Response of the CIS Member-States to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic (adopted by decision of the CIS Council of the Heads of Governments of 30 May 2002)* expiring in 2005, the participants recommended developing a new document for the next five-year period, involving in the process sectoral bodies of the CIS to ensure a multisectoral approach, with a special emphasis on access to antiretrovirals.

The meeting participants request the CIS Executive Council to bring the present recommendations to the attention of the Heads of Governments of the CIS States.