

LANDMARK AGREEMENT REACHED IN FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

Washington, DC, 25 April 2004 – A historic agreement to adopt a unified global response to tackling HIV/AIDS was reached by the international community today.

Despite stepped up resources and the best intentions, the AIDS epidemic continues to be one of the greatest crises of the century, with 40 million people currently infected and over 25 million deaths to date. As governments, financial institutions and the number of partners responding to AIDS increases, there is an urgent need for greater support and collaboration with heavily-affected countries and to avoid duplication and fragmentation of resources.

A major step was taken at a meeting today in Washington D.C., co-chaired by UNAIDS, the UK and the US, where donors and developing countries agreed to three core principles to better coordinate the scale-up of national AIDS responses. Known as the “Three Ones”, the principles are: one agreed HIV/AIDS action framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners; one national AIDS coordinating authority, with a broad based multi-sector mandate; and one agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system.

“Today, we left our flags and affiliations at the door,” said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. “It is not just about raising more resources, it is about making sure these resources are spent wisely to help countries mount sustainable and effective AIDS strategies. This is why the “Three Ones” are so crucial.”

Built on lessons learned from over two decades, the “Three Ones” will help improve the ability of donors and developing countries to work more effectively together, on a country by country basis.

“The UK, as the world’s second largest bilateral donor on HIV/AIDS, is firmly committed to the “Three Ones” principles for harmonising the efforts of donors in support of developing countries,” said Hilary Benn, UK Secretary of State for International Development. “This approach formed a major plank of our Call for Action on World AIDS Day last year and will be adopted in the UK’s new strategy for tackling HIV/AIDS globally. I welcome today’s landmark agreement and look forward to a stronger, more effective global response to the disease.”

“AIDS is an emergency that requires urgent action and a new way of doing business,” said Ambassador Randall Tobias, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. “The agreement reached today will help all partners to exercise their comparative advantage in a manner that will enhance and not constrain our collective response.”

To date, some AIDS programmes have been developed in isolation by well-intentioned donors, non-governmental organizations and others. Governments of

heavily-affected countries have often had to deal with confusing and duplicative demands to show progress. "At the country level, governments are struggling to fight the AIDS epidemic, while rushing to respond to conflicting and often repetitive donor requirements," said the Malawi Minister of State responsible for HIV/AIDS, Honorable Mary Kaphweleza Banda.

"In order to win the war on AIDS, we must all work together for the common good of poor people living in developing countries," said World Bank President James Wolfensohn of today's announcement. "Donor harmonization is a key component to fight AIDS successfully." The Bank's multi-country HIV/AIDS programmes aim to support national AIDS strategies in Africa and the Caribbean to help streamline the process.

At today's meeting, donor countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States were present along with representatives of the World Bank, the Global Fund and United Nations agencies. Also represented were non-governmental agencies and several developing countries.

The three principles were first identified through a preparatory process at global and country levels, initiated by UNAIDS in cooperation with the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. The first meeting to review these principles was held during the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2003.

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