

AIDS PLACED HIGH ON AGENDA OF HAITIAN PEACEKEEPING MISSION

Port-au-Prince, 14 June 2004 – Today efforts to combat HIV among peacekeeping troops bound for Haiti have received a significant boost. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and representatives from the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have arrived in the country to develop an HIV/AIDS programme for the newly established peacekeeping mission before the arrival of the main contingent of troops.

“This is an extremely important development,” said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “We know the impact of AIDS on peacekeepers. Therefore, it is imperative to have a comprehensive AIDS prevention programme in place that targets peacekeeping troops and civilian staff.”

Given that Haiti still constitutes a danger to international peace and security in the Caribbean region, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1542 in April 2004, setting up the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). According to this resolution the Security Council welcomes and encourages every effort by the United Nations to sensitize peacekeeping personnel in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in all its peacekeeping missions.

“It is very encouraging that the Security Council has placed such importance on the need to address HIV,” said Ulf Kristoffersson, Director of the UNAIDS office on AIDS, Security and Humanitarian Response who is heading the mission. “This will not only benefit the mission personnel but also the host community in Haiti which, with a prevalence rate of over five percent, is the most badly affected country outside sub-Saharan Africa. Haiti is extremely vulnerable to HIV.”

AIDS poses a particular threat to peacekeeping, which is a pillar of the international security system. In conflict situations armed personnel can be fifty times more at risk than the civilian population.

This joint endeavour to establish an HIV/AIDS programme from the outset of the mission to Haiti will be carried out under the auspices of the Cooperation Framework signed by UNAIDS and DPKO in 2001. Both parties have agreed to work together to respond to the growing AIDS epidemic and to mitigate its impact on international peace and security.

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