

UNAIDS GOVERNING BOARD HERALDS BREAKTHROUGH IN GLOBAL AIDS RESPONSE

International organizations agree to take concrete steps for greater coordination on AIDS at the country level

Geneva, 30 June 2005 - The governing board for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has unanimously agreed to put into practice recommendations on how the UN system and other multilateral institutions can work better together to strengthen the AIDS response in developing countries.

Although there has been increasing global commitment and resources to tackle AIDS in recent years, many developing countries are experiencing serious difficulties as they rapidly expand their delivery of AIDS treatment and HIV prevention services to communities. The international community's efforts to support these countries have been slowed by competing and conflicting planning, financing, programming, monitoring and evaluation processes that are often imposed by donors and international organizations. The result has been that a substantial amount of available resources are not being used effectively.

"We are at a critical stage in the AIDS response where 'making the money work' for countries is vital if we are going to get ahead of the epidemic. The agreement on the recommendations by the UNAIDS governing board is a major step forward and shows that everyone is fully committed to helping countries lighten the burden of AIDS," said UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot.

Recognizing the urgent need to put the money currently available for AIDS to better work, a 'Global Task Team' - made up of more than 55 governments and organizations, and facilitated by the UNAIDS Secretariat - was formed¹ in March 2005 to develop recommendations within 80 days on:

- coordination within international institutions such as the United Nations (UN), Global Fund and World Bank (the 'multilateral system'), to resolve areas of duplication and gap in the global response to AIDS; and
- how the multilateral system can streamline, simplify and further harmonize their AIDS procedures and practices to ensure AIDS responses are country-led and that to reduce the burden external aid can place on countries.

The Global Task Team submitted a report containing 10 bold and actionable recommendations for change on 14 June 2005.

"The inclusive and open Global Task Team process brought key donor and international organizations and partners together to examine critical issues, test the outer limits of what is possible, and develop recommendations that are both bold and realistic. This is much more than agreement on principles. This will change the way we work on AIDS," said Michel Sidibe, Co-Chair of the Global Task Team and UNAIDS Director of Country and Regional Support.

The recommendations underline that countries must lead an inclusive AIDS response with concrete action plans, and that international organizations such as the UN system and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria should make changes to the way they

work to ensure they are operating in line with the country plans and in harmony with each other. The recommendations also have wider implications for international partners beyond these to drive coordination at every level of the response.

“The work of the Global Task Team proves that development partners clearly see the urgency to work faster and better in the fight against AIDS,” said Ambassador Lennarth Hjelmaker, Sweden’s Special Ambassador on HIV/AIDS. “The recommendations stress the need for true inclusive national ownership with the participation of civil society and people living with and affected by HIV. The recommendations also show that multilateral institutions and other development partners are prepared to support these national efforts.”

For the United Nations system specifically, the recommendations call for:

- **Alignment of external support to national strategies, policies, systems, cycles, and plans** – this would include organizations carrying out joint assessments, reports and implementation plans that are in line with actions and needs outlined by the specific countries.
- **Closer UN coordination on AIDS at country level** - including the establishment of joint UN teams on AIDS in countries.
- **UN system-Global Fund problem-solving mechanisms at global level** – a team to help countries, on request, to solve problems and bottlenecks they are experiencing when accepting international funds and other support to implement AIDS programmes.
- **Clarification of the division of labour among multilateral institutions** – clear indication of which agencies take the lead in which areas, so that countries know exactly who to go to within the UN system for specific assistance.
- **Increased financing for technical support** - as funding grows, requests for technical support from the UN system increases also. Often under-funded, this support is intrinsic to helping countries turn new money into action on the ground.

At this week’s meeting of UNAIDS’ governing body (27-29 June 2005), known as the Programme Coordinating Board, the recommendations were endorsed and UNAIDS was requested to act on them. Implementation of this set of recommendations will rapidly improve the alignment and quality of international support, make better use of the money currently available to national AIDS responses, and ultimately support the scale-up of prevention and treatment programmes. The recommendations are also being considered during the replenishment process of the Global Fund.

¹ Leaders from donor and developing country governments, civil society, UN agencies and other multilateral and international institutions called for the forming of the Global Task Team at a high-level meeting entitled "The Global Response to AIDS: 'Making the Money Work', The Three Ones in Action" which was held in London on 9 March 2005.