

UNAIDS ANNOUNCES NEW POLICY POSITION PAPER ON HIV PREVENTION

Governing Board strongly endorses new policies for prevention

Geneva, 1 July 2005 – In response to the urgent need for action to reduce the growing numbers of HIV infections, the board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), unanimously approved a new policy approach to intensify HIV prevention this week. This policy position paper outlines essential principles, policy and programmatic actions that are needed to get ahead of the HIV epidemic.

“Member states recognize the crucial need for intensified HIV prevention efforts. With five million new infections each year it is only through a comprehensive and scaled up approach that we will reverse the spread of HIV,” said Executive Director Dr Peter Piot.

The primary goal of the position paper – which was developed through an inclusive consultative process with donors, national governments, non-governmental and community-based organizations and other partners - is to energize a strengthening of HIV prevention with an ultimate aim of universal access to HIV prevention and treatment. Currently, only one in five people needing HIV prevention have access to prevention programmes and only one in ten people have been tested for HIV. This gap has contributed to rising numbers of people living with HIV and particularly mounting rates of infection among women—who currently constitute just under half of all people living with HIV – and young people. Poor planning, inappropriate prioritization and low capacity combined with cultural, social and personal reluctance to discuss issues on sex, sexuality and drug use are some of the factors holding back efforts to scale up HIV prevention resulting in a major gap between the need and availability of HIV prevention services.

The position paper is grounded in a number of essential principles crucial to the success of any effective HIV prevention effort. These include that all prevention programmes should be comprehensive in scope, evidence informed and must be fundamentally grounded in respect for human rights (including gender equality). Programmes should be adapted to local environments and be sustainable at a coverage, scale and intensity that is enough to make a critical difference. Community participation is central to all programme planning and implementation.

“We know what works, and all HIV prevention programmes must be informed by scientific evidence. To be successful, HIV prevention must make use of all approaches known to be effective, not implementing exclusively one or a few select

actions in isolation,” said UNAIDS Director of Policy, Evidence and Partnerships Department, Dr Purnima Mane. “We also know that there is no ‘quick fix’ and that prevention programmes must be carefully adapted to relevant settings,” she added.

The paper underlines the gaps in existing HIV prevention actions and outlines essential policy and programmatic actions that must be taken to scale to bridge these gaps. Key to all HIV prevention efforts, the paper says, is that they should be ‘nationally owned and led’.

With the endorsement of the governing board, UNAIDS will strengthen its own response to support both global and national HIV prevention efforts. In line with its five core functions¹ UNAIDS will focus on advocacy on HIV prevention; policy development in areas critical for HIV prevention; technical support and capacity building for implementation of scaled up HIV prevention programmes; coordination and harmonization of HIV prevention efforts; and tracking, monitoring and evaluation of HIV prevention programmes.

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¹ The five core functions of UNAIDS as endorsed by the PCB in 2002 in Lisbon are, (i) leadership and advocacy for effective action on the epidemic; (ii) strategic information to guide efforts against AIDS worldwide; (iii) tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the epidemic and of responses to it; (iv) civil society engagement and partnership development; and (v) mobilization of resources to support an effective response.