

FINDING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO SCALING UP ACCESS TO HIV PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Global Steering Committee on scaling up towards universal access holds its first meeting in Washington, DC

Geneva, 10 January 2006 – An international effort to scale up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support with the aim of coming as close as possible to universal access to treatment for all those who need it by 2010 was launched today at a meeting in Washington, DC. More than 40 senior representatives from donor and developing countries, funding agencies, the United Nations, and people living with HIV are taking part in the first meeting of the newly-formed Global Steering Committee on scaling up towards universal access.

This new effort is grounded in country-level consultations that aim to develop national “roadmaps” toward universal access, building on current efforts to scale up AIDS programmes in low- and middle-income countries. The Steering Committee, co-chaired by Michel Sidibe of UNAIDS and Masood Ahmed of the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), will guide this global effort.

“Broad participation and country focus is what makes this effort special,” said Michel Sidibe, Director of Country and Regional Support at UNAIDS. “By starting at the country level and then tackling the big problems common to many countries and regions, we have the opportunity to find and address concrete, practical and workable solutions.” Mr Sidibe emphasized that the effort is country-led, country-driven, and country-owned. “It begins and ends with countries and communities delivering comprehensive AIDS services,” he added.

H.E. Mr Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairman of the African Union Commission, has already expressed his commitment to “mobilize African countries and facilitate the identification of specific objectives at country level in terms of HIV prevention, treatment and the provision of care and support to be attained by 2010.”

“We now have strong political commitment to move towards universal access”, said co-chair Masood Ahmed, Director General of International and Policy Division at DFID. “We have clear international declarations and targets to reach in terms of mitigation of the AIDS epidemic; now we need to move to action. This group is tasked with identifying the obstacles to action and finding solutions to support countries overcome them to move forward.”

The main objective of the Global Steering Committee is to explore practical, global-level solutions to key challenges to the AIDS response, such as:

- ⇒ Sustainable financing
- ⇒ Human resource capacity and health-social services system constraints
- ⇒ Development and distribution of affordable commodities and low-cost technologies
- ⇒ Human rights, stigma, discrimination and gender equity

In concert with this global-level work, a number of national and regional consultations will explore actionable solutions to the major obstacles at country and regional level. The country

consultations will also develop nationally agreed “roadmaps” for building significantly greater coverage of services by 2010.

UNAIDS will deliver its first assessment report on the process in late May 2006 at the high-level UN meeting to review progress in meeting the targets set out in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

In a UN resolution adopted on 23 December 2005, the UN General Assembly requested the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and its partners to assist countries in scaling up access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. The General Assembly decision emphasized the importance of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to HIV treatment by 2010 for all those who need it, reaffirming the commitment made by leaders of the G8 countries at their last summit in Gleneagles, Scotland.

This global movement to scale up towards universal access builds on current efforts to achieve several main UN goals:

- The 2001 UN General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS to expand the global AIDS response
- Millennium Development Goal 6, to reverse the spread of the epidemic by 2015
- United Nations General Assembly's 2005 World Summit call to implement a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it

It also builds upon the work of thousands of people designing and delivering HIV services in countries and communities around the world.

Despite important gains in political leadership and financial resources for AIDS, three million people died from AIDS and five million people became newly infected with HIV last year alone. Vastly increased HIV prevention and treatment efforts are urgently needed to slow and reverse the AIDS epidemic.

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