

UNAIDS calls for future leaders to stay focussed on AIDS

UNAIDS programme coordinating board approves 2010-2011 budget and work plan, highlighting prevention among injecting drug users and gender issues as priority areas

GENEVA – 24 June 2009 – The governing body of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) met in Geneva from 22-24 June for the 24th Meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board (Board).

At the meeting the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé presented his plans for the future direction of UNAIDS, highlighting the importance of a coordinated response to the epidemic amongst all stakeholders and particularly within the UN system.

“We must ensure that our future leaders stay focussed on AIDS—not fatigued by it,” said Michel Sidibé. “We must reposition UNAIDS in a crowded global health landscape. UNAIDS key objective will be to break the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic by putting back focus on HIV prevention.”

The Board approved the UNAIDS budget of US\$ 484.8 million for 2010 and 2011 and endorsed its action agenda and priority areas. In light of the ongoing financial crisis UNAIDS did not request an increase of its funding from previous levels. The UNAIDS executive director committed UNAIDS to act on three fronts— increasing results and their impact, expanded partnerships, and to transform itself into a more efficient and effective organisation. “We can do more with less,” said Sidibé.

Mr Sidibé also announced that UNAIDS will bring together the AIDS movement and the other global movements for health, human rights, women and development. “If we keep AIDS in isolation, we will fail to link HIV to the broader international health and development agenda, as represented by the MDGs,” he said. “Promoting such a comprehensive approach and leveraging these partnerships will be essential to sustain and accelerate progress in the next phase of the global response to AIDS. This is what I call the AIDS+MDG movement.”

The thematic segment of the meeting focussed on ‘people on the move’ and gave an important insight into the urgent need to provide universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for migrant populations and displaced people. The Board called on UNAIDS to facilitate inclusion of such programmes for people on the move including migrants and forcibly displaced populations in national AIDS strategies.

A forward-looking set of recommendations to increase coverage of essential and effective measures to greatly reduce HIV in drug users was endorsed at the meeting. It was specified that these important harm reduction measures include needle and syringe programmes, opioid substitution therapy, access to antiretroviral therapy and prevention of sexual transmission among drug users.

The Board also urged Governments, Donors and UNAIDS to significantly expand efforts to address inequality and inequities between men and women, gender based violence including sexual and physical abuse, and tackle harmful gender based practices and norms that serve as the main drivers of the epidemic.

Welcoming the pilot initiative to strengthen the capacity of African states in decision making bodies of UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Board asked for developing indicators to measure success.

The heads of Cosponsoring organizations of UNAIDS were asked to reaffirm their commitment to UN reform and promote the concept of delivering as one at the country level with a stronger strategic focus on UNAIDS. The Board also received an update on the preliminary findings of the independent evaluation of UNAIDS it commissioned in 2007. The final report will be presented at the December 2009 PCB meeting.

Over 300 participants and observers from member states, international organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations attended this year's meeting, which was chaired by Ethiopia with the Netherlands acting as vice chair and Guatemala as special rapporteur. The next meeting of the board will take place in December 2009. A complete record of the decisions, recommendations and conclusions of the meeting can be found at http://data.unaids.org/pub/BaseDocument/2009/20090624_pcb_24_decisions_final_en.pdf

Contact – Edward Mishaud | tel. +41 22 791 5587 | mishaude@unaids.org

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org