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AIDS AND SECURITY: NEW AND DIFFERENT THREATS

ASCI Report Provides New Evidence, Proposes New Actions on Links between Security, Conflict, Peacebuilding and HIV

The Hague / 22 September 2009 - A new report, released today titled “HIV/AIDS, Security and Conflict: New Realities, New Responses,” provides evidence of the diverse threats HIV poses to international and national peace and security. In the ten years since, the UN Security Council drew attention to the deadly nexus linking HIV and security, there has been both alarmism and denial over these purported links. In its report, published today, the AIDS, Security and Conflict Initiative (ASCI) provides evidence for policy-making. Its three-year research programme demonstrates that HIV has important impacts on security, just as security crises and security institutions can influence HIV incidence, but that with good policy and appropriate programmes these dangers can be successfully overcome.

ASCI addresses ten specific ways in which peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian response efforts may be better attuned to the risks of HIV. Among them are the following:

- ASCI urges new approaches to this global crisis, including greater attention to the links between violence against women, forced sex, and the increased risk of HIV. The report also identifies the groups of men who control sex workers and sex trafficking as a “core group” for influencing rates of HIV transmission.
- The new report suggests that the transition from war to peace can increase risks of HIV transmission as refugees go home, soldiers leave the army, and relief agencies wind down. ASCI urges that international donors provide funds to cover the gap in HIV services between relief and development, and that HIV prevention, treatment, care and support be integrated into disarmament and demobilization efforts.
- In many countries, laws and law enforcement drive the AIDS epidemic underground by criminalizing injecting drug use, sex work or homosexuality—thereby ruling out proven HIV prevention methods such as needle exchange and the promotion of condom use. ASCI calls for a new international effort, involving lawmakers and law enforcement agencies, for HIV-sensitive laws and policing.
- ASCI revisits the testing debate within the framework of a “Command Centered Approach” to HIV prevention within the military. The report looks into the possible advantages of

placing responsibility for AIDS policy at the highest level of command to allow for armies to achieve both the highest level of effectiveness *and* best practices in HIV prevention, treatment and care.

Souleymane M'boup, ASCI co-Chair, a former military doctor and virologist who discovered HIV 2 says, "the focus on HIV prevention has, understandably, been preoccupied with the biomedical science of HIV. This report intends to complement a growing body of social science research about the pandemic and our understanding of the political, economic and social factors driving it. Even if a vaccine were discovered today, the impacts of HIV/AIDS on families, societies, peace and security would continue to unfold for generations."

Michel Sidibe, Executive Director of UNAIDS, says, "These findings underscore the importance of aligning efforts to prevent sexual violence and HIV prevention—these connections have yet to be well established within the global context of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support."

Bert Koenders, Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, says: "The report of the AIDS, Security and Conflict Initiative is crucial. AIDS poses very specific challenges to fragile countries. This report helps us to implement programmes and policies that can successfully address the potential risks."

The result of three years of research, "HIV/AIDS, Security and Conflict: New Realities, New Responses" summarizes the findings of twenty-nine research studies (involving research partners in seventeen different countries) on HIV/AIDS and fragile states, uniformed services, humanitarian crises and post-conflict transitions.

A joint project of the Social Science Research Council (New York) and Clingendael Institute for International Relations (The Hague), ASCI's report is part of a global research initiative aimed at informing policy and programming by strengthening the evidence base and addressing critical gaps in knowledge in the fields of HIV/AIDS and security. Financial support for ASCI's work was provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Australian Agency for International Development, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNAIDS.