

UNAIDS' governing board underlines need to refocus on HIV prevention

Protecting human rights of sexual minorities highlighted as key to preventing new HIV infections

GENEVA, 10 December 2009 – The governing body of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB), met in Geneva from 8-10 December for its 25th meeting.

At the meeting, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, spoke of progress but also of the challenges that the AIDS response has faced since he took office nearly one year ago.

“It is time to regroup and re-strategize,” Mr Sidibé said. “We must leverage the AIDS movement as a force for transformation in global health, development and environmental sustainability, and mobilize a prevention revolution.”

The theme of HIV prevention ran throughout the meeting, with the Board endorsing a call by the Executive Director to make reducing HIV transmission among men who have sex with men and transgender people one of the core priorities of UNAIDS. The Board recognized that advancing the human rights of men who have sex with men and transgender people was central to a more effective AIDS response. Mr Sidibé said UNAIDS would “...continue its struggle against inequality, intolerance and injustice.”

At the PCB, UNAIDS reaffirmed its commitment to supporting countries in their efforts to define and drive their own responses through true partnerships with national, bilateral, and multilateral stakeholders. This will mean helping countries to improve and expand their capacity and strengthen the systems needed to lead the scale up of comprehensive national AIDS responses within a broader health and development context (“AIDS + MDGs”).

UNAIDS will continue to provide technical assistance and support for country efforts to coordinate and align donor activities with a strong action-oriented country driven plan. Early next year, UNAIDS will work with partners in country to establish processes to support national ownership and define benchmarks to measure the collective movement towards ensuring a more sustainable response.

The report of the Second Independent Evaluation was well received by Member States, Cosponsors and civil society organizations represented at the meeting. Recommendations were discussed in detail and all of the recommendations will be reviewed by the Board at the 26th meeting in June 2010. A task force consisting of Member States will be established in the interim period to support work in implementing the recommendations of the Second Independent Evaluation.

The results of the Global Task Force on Women and Girls, Gender and Equality were the backdrop to a broad debate on stronger gender responses. The Board gave full endorsement to the success of this process.

The World Bank presented a report on the perceived impact of the financial crisis on countries' abilities to meet their universal access targets. Board members stressed the need for UNAIDS to advocate strongly for commitment to funding in order to sustain and scale up the progress made to date in the response. Board members also underlined the importance of focusing efforts on where they will have the most impact.

“Investments today could half the number of new infections by 2015,” said Mr Sidibé. “This would avert 2.3 million new infections and save US \$12.5 billion in treatment costs.”

More than 300 participants and observers from Member States, international organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations attended the meeting, which was chaired by Ethiopia with the Netherlands acting as vice chair and Guatemala as special rapporteur. In 2010, the Netherlands will assume the role of chair, and the Board elected El Salvador as vice chair and Japan as special rapporteur for the year ahead.

A complete record of the Board’s decisions, recommendations and conclusions as well as an overview of all documents presented at the 25th PCB can be found at:

www.unaids.org/en/AboutUNAIDS/Governance/PCBArchive/25th_PCB_Meeting_December_2009.asp

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About the Programme Coordinating Board

UNAIDS’ Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) consists of representatives of 22 governments from all geographic regions, the UNAIDS Cosponsors, and five representatives of non-governmental organizations, including associations of people living with HIV.

About UNAIDS

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