



UNAIDS
JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS

UNHCR
UNICEF
WFP
UNDP
UNFPA
UNODC
ILO
UNESCO
WHO
WORLD BANK

Telephone: 41 22 791 3392

Reference: EXO/MB/cr

Her Excellency Ms Selma Ashipala-
Musavyi
Permanent Representative of
Namibia to the United Nations at
Vienna
Chairperson of the 52nd Session of
the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Embassy of the Republic of Namibia
Strozzigasse 10-14
1080 Vienna
Austria

12 February 2009

Excellency,

As the newly-appointed Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS), I have the honour to express my support for the successful deliberations at the forthcoming 52nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. I have noted the importance of this session in follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly concerning the overview and progress achieved by Governments in meeting the goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008. These were set out in the Political Declaration and adopted by the UN General Assembly at its twentieth special session.

In considering its review of progress, the Commission may wish in particular to note the parallel commitments made by the General Assembly in its twenty-sixth special session in 2001 concerning HIV/AIDS. The Declaration of Commitment adopted by that special session referred specifically to "harm-reduction efforts related to drug use" as elements of a wide range prevention programme to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS¹. This view was repeated in the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS². It has been highly appreciated that the Commission has reaffirmed both these resolutions in its resolution 51/14 and thereby recognized explicitly the inextricable link between the issues of the harms associated with drug use and efforts to combat AIDS.

In assisting member states to fulfil the commitments made by the General Assembly in relation to harm reduction, UNAIDS, including our Cosponsors and in particular UNODC and WHO, have amassed a considerable body of strong and consistent evidence on the effectiveness of harm reduction approaches. Conversely, there is no convincing evidence of major negative consequences of such interventions, such as initiation of injecting among people who have previously not injected or an increase in the duration or frequency of illicit drug use or drug injection. In other words, harm reduction provides an excellent return on public investment.

20 AVENUE APPIA
1211 GENEVA 27
SWITZERLAND

Tel +41 22 791 3666
Fax +41 22 791 4187
www.unaids.org

¹ UNGASS on AIDS Res S-26/2, adopting the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2001) A/RES/S-26/2.

² UN GA Res 60/262 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, A/RES/60/262 (2006).

Uniting the world against **AIDS**

In seeking greater UN system-wide coherence on these issues I recall resolution 51/14 of the 51st session of the Commission which *inter alia* called for:

“collaboration among Member States represented both in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and on the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS towards the promotion of better coordination and alignment of the HIV/AIDS response in order to scale up towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, care, treatment and support services for drug users;”

In this connection I am pleased to convey to you the following resolution 14.2 of the 23rd Meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, 15-17 December 2008, namely:

14.2 Mindful of Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 51/14, which calls for collaboration among Member States represented both in the Commission and on the Programme Coordinating Board towards the promotion of better coordination and alignment of the AIDS response in order to scale up towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, care, treatment and support services for people who use drugs; *takes note* of the upcoming UNGASS review of the World Drug Problem and *requests* UNODC, as one of the UNAIDS Cosponsors, to work towards an outcome of the meeting that accurately reflects the importance of decreasing HIV transmission and co-infection in people who use drugs.

I also wish to recall resolution 8.2 of the Seventeenth meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, 27–29 June 2005 namely that the PCB:

“8.2 endorses the UNAIDS Policy Position Paper; Intensifying HIV prevention;” and that the essential programmatic actions for HIV prevention included in the Position Paper specify:

3. Preventing transmission of HIV through injecting drug use – by developing a comprehensive, integrated and effective system of measures that consists of the full range of treatment options, (notably drug substitution treatment) and the implementation of harm reduction measures (through, among others, peer outreach to injecting drug users, and sterile needle and syringe programmes), voluntary confidential HIV counselling and testing, prevention of sexual transmission of HIV among drug users (including condoms and prevention and treatment for sexually transmitted infections), access to primary healthcare, and access to antiretroviral therapy. Such an approach must be based on promoting, protecting and respecting the human rights of drug users.

In addition, I note that Resolution 49/4 of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2006:

“2. Endorses the recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors, as well as related decisions of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS;”

In conveying these resolutions I bear in mind the important debates to be conducted at the 52nd session of the Commission. I wish to convey my hope that the Commission will further advance UN system-wide coherence in relation to the body of evidence in support of harm reduction measures in tackling drug use.

In light of the above-mentioned resolutions of the 51st session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the 23rd meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, I wish to convey the ongoing help of the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) in support of urgent efforts by member states to use the best available means to tackle the twin issues of HIV and drug use.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michel Sidibé', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Michel Sidibé