

Press release

Uniting for HIV Prevention

UNAIDS, civil society, treatment activists, private sector and governments call for ‘out of the ordinary partnerships’ to intensify HIV prevention efforts.

Toronto, 14 August 2006 – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is ‘uniting for HIV prevention’ with civil society, treatment activists, the private sector and governments to call for the global community to mobilize an alliance for HIV prevention.

Representatives from the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the governments of India and Sweden and Merck pharmaceuticals outlined the concept of ‘uniting for HIV prevention’ at a press conference on the second day of the XVI International AIDS Conference, taking place in Toronto, Canada.

“There is an urgent need to build on good work already taking place and mobilize an alliance for HIV prevention that goes ‘beyond the converted’ involving more than ‘the usual suspects’, and with strong links to HIV treatment activism,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot.

“We need an alliance that is united by commitment to the goal of saving lives, even if we may have different tactics. We need an alliance that draws in the best and brightest minds of our generations, and that is a partnership between governments, people living with HIV, the most vulnerable groups, civil society, faith-based organizations, business and international institutions,” he said.

Across the world, a small but growing number of countries have reduced HIV prevalence through sound prevention efforts. However, in 2005, there were still 4.1 million new HIV infections with over 40% of new adult infections occurring among young people aged 15-24. According to latest estimates, HIV prevention services reach only one in ten of those in need.

‘Uniting for HIV prevention’ is a consolidation of existing advocacy and public mobilization efforts around HIV prevention and hopes to harness the collective strengths of organizations in bringing about a sustainable response to HIV epidemic.

The UNAIDS policy position paper on intensifying HIV prevention provides a common ground around which advocacy for scaling up HIV prevention is based.

Uniting for HIV prevention will focus attention on five major areas:

- Scaling up HIV prevention as part of the movement towards universal access to HIV treatment, prevention, care and support. Simultaneously promoting increased access to HIV prevention as well as HIV treatment.
- Removing barriers to HIV prevention—which will involve the full implementation of policy and programmatic actions agreed in the UNAIDS policy position paper on intensifying HIV prevention.
- Resource mobilization for HIV prevention- working to ensure fully funded national HIV prevention plans.

- Capacity building for HIV prevention- building capacity of the public and private sector in order to sustain HIV prevention programmes.
- Evidence informed prioritization of HIV prevention programmes- ensuring that evidence-informed prevention programmes reach those who need them most, including populations most at risk, marginalized and vulnerable to HIV infection.

The broad and inclusive grouping of organizations ‘uniting for prevention’ will seek to influence policy makers as well as generate public opinion on the need to bridge the HIV prevention gap. Together, they seek to shape a movement that will support the realization of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

‘Uniting for Prevention’ – the players and their roles

Civil society

The movement will bring together a large number of civil society organizations that work on different facets of the AIDS response across different sectors and with a variety of community groups. These include networks of people living with HIV, young people, women’s groups, human rights organizations, faith-based organizations, AIDS service organizations and community groups. They can bring pressure on their constituencies to prioritize HIV prevention.

Governments

The movement will bring together government leaders to push for greater acceleration and resource allocation for HIV prevention efforts.

Treatment activists

As the forerunner of treatment activism, their push for HIV prevention is a wake-up call to the world on how gains made in treatment will not be sustained if the rate of scale up of HIV prevention does not dramatically increase in the next few years.

Private sector

The growth of the private sector is dependent upon a healthy and vibrant workforce and a healthy population that can propel economic growth. The private sector can also help in lending their expertise to rapidly scale up HIV prevention efforts and invest in innovations that can make HIV prevention simpler.

UNAIDS

UNAIDS will unite the various stakeholders involved in global HIV prevention efforts, and lead advocacy programmes for realizing a comprehensive, scaled up and fully funded HIV prevention response.

“Here today we have representatives from all corners of the AIDS response. We are calling for others to join us, quickly, because AIDS needs an exceptional response where every partnership matters,” said Dr Piot.

UNAIDS and partners will further discuss issues surrounding ‘uniting for prevention’ at a satellite session entitled ‘Intensifying prevention-leveraging the global community’ that will take place on Thursday 17 August. The satellite panel will bring together perspectives of various stakeholders on galvanizing and strengthening HIV prevention efforts to explore the challenges of scaling up HIV prevention and bridging the HIV prevention gap.

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