

Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia

Against the background of the global emergency of the HIV/AIDS epidemic with 40 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS, 90 per cent in developing countries and 75 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, representatives of States and Governments from Europe and Central Asia, together with invited observers, met in Dublin, Ireland, from 23 to 24 February 2004, for the Conference "Breaking the Barriers – Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia" and made the following declaration:

Recognising that poverty, underdevelopment and illiteracy are among the principal contributing factors to the spread of HIV/AIDS, and noting with grave concern that HIV/AIDS is compounding poverty and is now reversing or impeding development in many countries;

Emphasising the importance of sustained, pro-poor economic growth through poverty-reduction policies, programmes and strategies for the success of the fight against HIV/AIDS;

Recognising that the promotion of equality between women and men, girls and boys and respecting the right to reproductive and sexual health, and access to sexuality education, information and health services as well as openness about sexuality, are fundamental factors in the fight against the pandemic;

Reaffirming the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS on 27 June 2001;

Reaffirming the development goals as contained in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session in September 2000, and in the Road Map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and other international development goals and targets;

Reaffirming the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development adopted by the twenty-first special session of the United Nations General Assembly in July 1999;

Reaffirming the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing, 1995) and the further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly in June 2000;

Expressing profound concern that in the European and Central Asian region at least 2.1 million of our people are now living with HIV/AIDS;

Noting with serious concern the particularly rapid escalation of the epidemic among young people in Eastern Europe, where HIV prevalence in the adult population is reaching critical levels in a number of countries and also the significant potential for the rapid spread of HIV in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia;

Also noting with serious concern the resurgence of HIV/AIDS prevalence in Western Europe, including HIV resistant to anti-retroviral therapy, where the disease remains a potent threat to our young people;

Emphasising that the most seriously affected countries, mainly in southern Africa, are facing collapse in one or more sectors of society, and agreeing that the HIV/AIDS epidemic threatens to become a crisis of unprecedented proportions in our region, undermining public health, development, social cohesion, national security and political stability in many of our countries;

Agreeing that we must act collectively to tackle this crisis through a deepening of coordination, cooperation and partnership within and between our countries and are

encouraged by proposals made at the Conference to strengthen the capacity of the European Union to fight effectively against the spread of HIV/AIDS;

Confirming that the respect, protection and promotion of human rights is fundamental to preventing transmission of HIV, reducing vulnerability to infection and dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS;

Acknowledging that the prevention of HIV infection, through the promotion of safer and responsible sexual behaviour and practices, including through condom use, must be the mainstay of the sub-national, national, regional and international response to the epidemic and that prevention, care, support and treatment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS are mutually reinforcing elements of an effective response and must be integrated in a comprehensive approach to combat the epidemic;

Recognising that in our region persons at the highest risk of and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection include drug injectors and their sexual partners, men who have sex with men, sexworkers, trafficked women, prisoners and ethnic minorities and migrant populations which have close links to high prevalence countries;

Stressing that without urgent action, HIV/AIDS will continue to move into the general population;

Recognising that women and girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection;

Recognising that a focus on the role of men and boys in combating HIV/AIDS and in the promotion of gender equality will benefit everyone and society as a whole, and that engaging men and boys as partners will encourage them to take responsibility for their sexual behaviour and to respect the rights of women and girls;

Recognising that in order to be able to tackle the HIV/AIDS crisis, we need strong basic health care systems and services to ensure universal and equitable access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care;

Recognising that success in the fight against HIV/AIDS is linked to the fight against other sexually transmittable infections and the fight against tuberculosis;

Emphasising that while young people are vulnerable, they themselves are key actors and agents of change in the fight against HIV/AIDS and are a major resource for the response at national and regional levels;

Acknowledging that the principle of greater involvement of people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS is critical to ethical and effective national responses to the epidemic;

Recognising that investment in research and development for more effective therapeutic and preventive tools, such as microbicides and vaccines, will be essential to securing the long-term success of HIV and AIDS responses;

We have agreed on the following actions to accelerate the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS;

Leadership

1. Promote strong and accountable leadership at the level of our Heads of State and Government to protect our people from this threat to their future, and promote human rights and tackle stigma and ensure access to education, information and services for all those in need;
2. Encourage and facilitate strong leadership by civil society and the private sector in our countries in contributing to the achievement of the goals and targets of the Declaration of Commitment;

3. Accelerate the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration of Commitment relating to orphans and girls and boys infected and affected by HIV/AIDS¹;
 4. Establish and reinforce national HIV/AIDS partnership forums including meaningful participation of civil society, and particularly of people living with HIV/AIDS and their advocates, to design, review, monitor and report progress in the fight against the disease, and to take timely and determined action to identify and address barriers to implementation;
 5. In 2004-2005, promote the active involvement of the institutions of the European Union, and other relevant institutions and organisations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Regional Committee of the World Health Organisation, in partnership with UNAIDS through its co-sponsoring agencies and its Secretariat, in our common effort to strengthen coordination and cooperation;
- Make the fight against HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia a regular item on the agendas of our regional institutions and organisations;
6. Provide increased and results-based financial and technical resources to scale up access to prevention, care and sustained treatment, including effective low cost treatment such as generics, in the most affected countries with the greatest needs through national and regional allocations as well as from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the European Union, new public and private partnerships, multilateral and bilateral financing mechanisms;

Prevention

7. Reinvigorate our efforts to ensure the target of the Declaration of Commitment² that, by 2005, at least 90 percent of young men and women aged 15 to 24 have access to the information, education, including peer education and youth-specific HIV education, and services necessary to develop the life skills required to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection, in dialogue with young persons, parents, families, educators and health-care providers;
8. By 2010, ensure through the scaling up of programmes that 80% of the persons at the highest risk of and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS are covered by a wide range of prevention programmes providing access to information, services and prevention commodities and identifying and addressing factors that make these groups and communities particularly vulnerable to HIV infection and promote and protect their health, and intensify cross border, sub-regional and regional technical collaboration and sharing of best practices through the EU and regional organisations in the prevention of HIV transmission among vulnerable groups;
9. Scale up access for injecting drug users to prevention, drug dependence treatment and harm reduction services through promoting, enabling and strengthening the widespread introduction of prevention, drug dependence treatment and harm reduction programmes³ (e.g. needle and syringe programmes, bleach and condom distribution, voluntary HIV counselling and testing, substitution drug therapy, STI diagnosis and treatment) in line with national policies;
10. Ensure that HIV positive women and expectant mothers should have access to high quality maternal and reproductive health care services in order to prevent mother to child-transmission;
11. By 2010, eliminate⁴ HIV infection among infants in Europe and Central Asia;

¹ Declaration of Commitment of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, paragraphs 65-67

² Declaration of Commitment of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, target 53, page 21.

³ The WHO recommends that at least 60% of injecting drug users have access to drug dependence treatment and harm reduction programmes in order to have an impact on the epidemic among this group.

⁴ Elimination is defined as less than 2% of all new infections are acquired by an infant from his or her infected mother

12. Ensure men, women and adolescents to have universal and equitable access to and promote the use of a comprehensive range of high quality, safe, accessible, affordable and reliable reproductive and sexual health care services, supplies and information including access to preventive methods such as male and female condoms, voluntary testing, counseling and follow-up;
13. By 2005, to develop national and regional strategies and programmes to increase the capacity of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection, and reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS;
14. By 2005, to develop national and regional strategies ensuring that all men and women in uniformed services, including armed forces and civil defence forces, have access to information, services and prevention commodities to reduce risk-taking behaviour and encourage safe behaviour, and urge the European Union, NATO and other regional and international security institutions in partnership with UNAIDS to lead such efforts;
15. Control the incidence and prevalence of sexually-transmitted infections, particularly amongst those at the highest risk of and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, through increased public awareness of their role in HIV transmission, improved and more accessible services for prompt diagnosis and efficient treatment;
16. Fund, improve, and harmonise surveillance systems, in line with international standards, to track and monitor the epidemic, risk behaviours and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS;
17. Request the Global Commission on International Migration to take into account in its work the threat of exposure to HIV/AIDS particularly to migrant women and unaccompanied and orphaned children;
18. Increase commitment to research and development for new technologies that better meet the prevention needs of people living with or most vulnerable to HIV transmission including increasing public sector investment in vaccines and microbicides to prevent HIV infection;

Living with HIV/AIDS

19. Combat stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia, including through a critical review and monitoring of existing legislation, policies and practices with the objective of promoting the effective enjoyment of all human rights for people living with HIV/AIDS and members of affected communities;
20. By 2005, provide universal access to effective, affordable and equitable prevention, treatment and care including safe anti-retroviral treatment to people living with HIV/AIDS in the countries in our region⁵ where access to such treatment is currently less than universal, including through the technical support of the UN through the global initiative led by the World Health Organisation and UNAIDS to ensure 3 million people globally are on anti-retroviral treatment by 2005 ("3 by 5"). The goal of providing effective anti-retroviral treatment must be conducted in a poverty-focused manner, equitable, and to those people who are at the highest risk of and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS;
21. Ensure early implementation of the WTO Decision of 30 August 2003 on the implementation of paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health;
22. Increase access to non-discriminatory palliative care, counseling, psychosocial support, housing assistance, and other relevant social services for people living with HIV/AIDS;
23. Invest in public research and development for the development of affordable and easier to use therapeutics and diagnostics to support expanded treatment access and improve the quality of life of people living with HIV;

⁵ The treatment gap in the region is estimated by the WHO to be at least 100,000 people in 2003.

24. Monitor best practices on and take concrete steps to exchange information on service delivery for prevention, treatment and care, particularly for persons at the highest risk of and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection;

Partnership

25. Strengthen coordination, cooperation and partnership among the countries of Europe and Central Asia, as well as with their trans-Atlantic and other development partners, to scale up local capacity to fight the epidemic and mitigate its consequences in the most affected countries with the greatest needs, and in countries with a high risk of a major epidemic;

26. Involve civil society and faith-based organizations, as well as people living with HIV/AIDS and persons at the highest risk of and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection in the development and implementation of national HIV/AIDS prevention and care strategies and financing plans, including through participation in national partnership forums;

27. Work with leaders from the private sector in fighting HIV/AIDS through workplace education programmes, employee non-discrimination policies, provision of treatment, counseling, care, and support services, and through engagement with policy makers on the local, national and regional levels;

28. Involve the national and international pharmaceutical industry in a public-private partnership including with relevant international organisations such as the World Health Organisation in helping to tackle the epidemic along all points of the drug supply chain – from manufacturing to pricing to distribution;

29. Ensure effective coordination between donors, multilateral organisations, civil society and Governments in the effective delivery of assistance to the countries most in need of support in the implementation of their national HIV/AIDS strategies, based on ongoing processes on simplification and harmonization particularly the UNAIDS guiding principles;⁶

30. Establish sustainable partnerships with the media, recognising the critical role that it plays in influencing attitudes and behaviour and in providing HIV/AIDS related information;

31. Support stronger regional cooperation and networking among people living with HIV/AIDS and civil society organisations in Europe and Central Asia, and call upon the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in partnership with the European Union, existing civil society networks and other regional partner institutions to assist, facilitate and coordinate such collaboration;

Follow-up

32. We commit ourselves to closely monitor and evaluate the implementation of the actions outlined in this Declaration, along with those of the Declaration of Commitment of the United Nations General Assembly Session on HIV/AIDS, and call upon the European Union and other relevant regional institutions and organisations, in partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to establish adequate forums and mechanisms including the involvement of civil society and people living with HIV/AIDS to assess progress at regional level every second year, beginning in 2006.

Dublin, 24 February 2004

⁶ These are: that there should be one agreed national HIV/AIDS Action Framework that drives alignment of all partners., one national AIDS authority with a broad-based multisectoral mandate, and one agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system.