REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Outline of Report
Additional documents for this item: COVID-19 and HIV: Lessons learned, country actions and responses by the Joint Programme (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP1)

Action required at this meeting—the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

3. Take note of the report of the Executive Director
Introduction

- We are in a very different place to when we last met in December
- COVID19 has already had devastating impacts that have transformed our world.
- I am proud of how UNAIDS has quickly adjusted in this time of great uncertainty and upheaval. The teams and partners of the Joint Programme have moved quickly to help protect HIV prevention, treatment and care services while also repurposing and leveraging existing HIV networks and infrastructure to respond to COVID19.
- Today, I will talk to you about our work on mitigating the impact of COVID19, progress on some of the issues I flagged for you in my report to the 45th PCB, and also on the on-going internal transformation of UNAIDS.

We are concerned about the colliding epidemics of HIV and COVID19.

- COVID19 found a very unequal world; it is exacerbating existing inequalities.
- COVID19 has shown us irrevocably that health must be a human right, that universal healthcare is the ultimate global public good that cannot wait for 2030.
- Pandemics cannot be tackled by health systems alone. Far from being just a health crisis, covid19 is also a rights crisis, a social crisis, an economic crisis.
- From our work on HIV, we know that to beat pandemics, we must focus on addressing inequality in access and inequality in outcomes, head on.
- The Joint Programme has mobilized urgent support for COVID19 responses in 80 countries while working to ensure that progress in the AIDS response is not rolled back.
- Our focus has been on 4 key areas:
  o To monitor and protect national HIV treatment, prevention, and care services
  o To leverage lessons learned from the HIV response to support the design and implementation of the global and national responses to the coronavirus epidemic
  o To continue to monitor and to defend the human rights of key populations and women and girls, particularly regarding lockdown measures
  o To reflect with our partners on the future strengthening of the global health architecture and UNAIDS role within it in the light of the pandemic.
- Together with WHO, UNAIDS sounded the alarm that unless urgent efforts are made to avoid interruptions in health services and supplies, we will see serious reversals in gains made against HIV.
Our models showed that a 6-month disruption of HIV treatment could cause 500,000 additional AIDS-related deaths, including from TB in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Gains made in prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV since 2010 could be wiped out, with new infections among children rising by as much as 162% in Malawi and 139% in Uganda.

- At the global level we are leveraging our 25 years’ experience of fighting the HIV epidemic to shape multisectoral responses, empower and put communities at the centre, protect human rights of and amplify voices of vulnerable groups tackling stigma, discrimination and harmful social norms.

- UNAIDS was among the 13 agencies on the UN task team which shaped the UN Framework for the socio-economic response to COVID19. UNAIDS introduced the fifth pillar on Social Cohesion and Community Resilience within the framework and we are actively supporting its implementation at country-level through UNCTs.

- As the COVID 19 crisis unfolded, UNAIDS reallocated half of our country activity budgets and UBRAF country envelopes for 2020 towards mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV and people vulnerable to HIV.

- Across the globe, the Joint Programme is actively supporting government, communities and partners in the COVID-19 response. A number of UNAIDS Country Directors have been asked to take on the role of UN COVID-19 coordinator, including in South Africa and Kenya. In Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chad, El Salvador and Kenya, the UNAIDS Country Directors are coordinating the UN response team for duty of care to staff.

- At this critical time, UNAIDS has brought back staff capacity in the important area of access to medicines. We have advanced work two complementary tracks first supporting the intergovernmental and interagency technical work advancing the Costa Rica call to action which led to the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool and second, helping to open the enabling space by amplifying global popular demand that no one be left behind in accessing any COVID-19 vaccine or treatment.

- Ahead of the 73rd World Health Assembly, UNAIDS coordinated the call for a People’s Vaccine—license free, free of charge and available to all people in all countries as a global public good.

- From the outset of this COVID crisis, the duty of care towards UNAIDS staff has been a top priority for me.

- I established a Covid Crisis Committee to implement necessary measures to protect staff and ensure the continuity of UNAIDS operations.
o We moved efficiently to teleworking in 60 of our offices, including our headquarters here in Geneva. As of 21 May, our staff have started returning to HQ and we are monitoring the situation carefully regarding the return for our offices in the field.

o Our recently appointed Staff Well-being Advisor joined in February, who has been providing critical support to staff to cope with the challenges, disruptions and transitions in how we work, prompted by COVID-19.

Together we can end AIDS: Be part of making history

• We have launched the process of development of the next UNAIDS Strategy in two phases. The first phase is focused on a review of the results achieved under the current strategy, and I have invited all PCB members and key UNAIDS stakeholders to contribute.

  o There is overwhelming interest. We have over 3,000 responses to our online questionnaire to date, and we are collecting inputs through interviews and focus group discussions in coming weeks.

  o We are also preparing a detailed evidence review of the current Strategy, which will be released at the end of July.

  o These and other sources of information will be used to inform the Multi-Stakeholder Consultations on the Strategy, that will be planned for September. The review will provide analysis of what did and did not work in the current strategy for specific locations and populations.

• I seek your support for the next global AIDS Strategy that will enable us to accelerate progress, close the gaps and strengthen our collective response to pandemics such as COVID-19.

• Critical to this process are the detailed options we will present to the PCB following the consultation, which will likely include:

  o Option 1: Maintain the focus and structure of current strategy, extending the timeline to the end of 2025

  o Option 2: Maintain the critical pillars that have delivered results in the current strategy, its ambition and the principles underpinning it to the end of 2025, but also build on the current strategy to prioritise critical areas that are lagging behind and the broader reach of the Joint Programme in responding to pandemics, such as COVID-19, and other emerging threats.

  o Option 3: Develop a comprehensive new UNAIDS Strategy from scratch.
Each of these options will reflect the new 2025 targets and resource needs that will be available in the coming months.

I see advantages to Option 2 of building on our momentum and the unique strengths of this Joint Programme, while making it clear that business as usual will not get us to the end of the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

In order to ensure we have adequate time to develop the next Strategy, I would recommend that following the Multi-Stakeholder Consultations in September, the PCB, facilitated by its Bureau, consider an inter-sessional decision on which option to pursue and then commence on Phase 2 - the development of the next Strategy.

- The strategy would be presented to the PCB in December as a draft, and then adopted by the PCB in March 2021, intersessionally or at a special session (possibly virtual) of the PCB.

- This timeline aims to deliver an ambitious next Strategy that will be aligned to the decision to host the next United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS in June 2021, in consultation with the UN Secretary-General and the newly elected President of the General Assembly.

Throughout this process, I am insisting on the widest possible outreach, engagement and participation in the strategy process to ensure that in the strategy process and in the AIDS response, no one is left behind. Links to provide online inputs and the latest updates on the Strategy process are available at: https://www.unaids.org/en/Global_AIDS_strategy

Working to end AIDS every day, drive progress in the accelerated decade of action to deliver the SDGs and transform UNAIDS

UNAIDS Advisory Group

- At the 45th PCB, I announced the establishment of the UNAIDS Advisory Group (UAG) to advise me during the transition period up to mid-2021.

  - The UAG is tasked with generating fresh ideas and practical recommendations to help guide me and UNAIDS senior management on strengthening our programmatic engagement in critical areas, shaping the next phase of the AIDS response and enhancing the role and visibility of UNAIDS on key issues.

  - The UAG met face to face at the end of February in South Africa, centred around three broad and interrelated themes: framing and messaging around the HIV response; programmatic priorities; and UNAIDS institutional transformation. With
senior management, I am in the process of taking forward the recommendations from this meeting.

- The UAG is also providing us with a deeper-dive on programmatic priorities in areas including Adolescent Girls & Young Women, Financing, and Human Rights & Key Populations, Science, and Access to Medicines through a series of breakout groups. These groups will include participation beyond UAG members to explore priority issues relevant to the strategy review and development process.

**Education + initiative**

- I have continued working on the education+ initiative that I announced at the PCB with my sister Principals from UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNWomen
  - Every week, 5100 girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa are infected with HIV; 7 out of 10 girls and young women do not have comprehensive knowledge about HIV.
  - The initiative is focused on adolescent girls and young women and completion of quality secondary education, which protects against HIV and yields multiple other social and economic outcomes for advancing health, gender equality and development.
  - We want to leverage education systems as a strategic entry-point for delivery of the broader ‘plus’ package of essential supports for empowerment: comprehensive sexuality education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, addressing gender-based violence (in and out of schools), and advancing economic empowerment.

**UNAIDS and the Global Fund**

- Almost two decades of collaboration between UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria have transformed the ways in which countries are able to approach, fund and manage major public health challenges. The 2019 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expresses our shared determination to continue to have a major and lasting impact in countries.
  - We are working to operationalize the MoU and have identified priority areas for closer collaboration
    1. Strategic information
    2. Sustainable country responses
    3. Human rights, gender equality and community service delivery
    4. Prevention and treatment access, and community engagement
    5. COVID19-resilience and innovation in crisis situations
We are establishing a mechanism for mutual accountability in the operational framework

We are transforming the internal culture of the UNAIDS Secretariat

- The Management Action Plan provides a foundation for transformative change – ensuring we have a workplace culture that ensures safety and dignity for all. There are three elements that I have deepened:
  1. Organizational culture change and feminist leadership principles. Culture change requires reflection, dialogue, listening and deliberate action. We have enlisted the support of an organization with valuable experience assisting mandate-driven organizations like UNAIDS to take forward our transformative change agenda, assist crisis recovery and review aspects of our human resources policies and their implementation. In my experience, the time and energy will be an important investment that strengthens the quality of our work and results.
  2. Internal communication and collaboration. We have new tools and dedicated capacity. This is part of energizing the Secretariat and how we deliver our mission. We and better able to recognize and celebrate the activism and solidarity that is at the core of our day-to-day action, especially as our teams take on the COVID-19 pandemic. We mobilized a virtual internal Strategy Team, using an application-driven process and tapping into diverse skills across our workforce.
  3. Culture of care and wellbeing. Focusing on care and wellbeing shapes culture and working relationships, and it drives performance – supporting our people to be well and deliver, and managers to create the right conditions in the teams they lead.
  4. We have developed a new delegation of authority framework for human resources decision making, passing responsibilities and accountabilities, where appropriate, to regional and country offices. As this comes into effect, we will progressively establish HRM experts in each of our regional offices to provide advice and support where it is most needed – close to field operations.

Resourcing the Joint Programme

- The COVID 19 pandemic must not be an excuse to divert investment from HIV. AIDS is not yet over and the right to health means no one disease should be fought at the expense of the other.
- As always, we are grateful for the steadfast support of PEPFAR and the leadership of Ambassador Birx who was supposed to chair this PCB.
• We are working closely with all of our donors to highlight the unique added value of UNAIDS in this moment, emphasizing the continued urgency of the AIDS response and the needs of people living with and affected by HIV.

• We are thankful to all our donors for their continued support and for the funds disbursed and committed during the year 2020. We have so far received USD 77.8 million in core funds for the UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF), compared to only USD 33 million at the same time last year.

• This investment remains ever more important in supporting countries to reach HIV epidemic control.

• However, as the PCB is aware, the UBRAF continues to be underfunded and we also experience significant funding cuts through currency fluctuations. This undermines our ability to deliver the support that countries, communities and partners like the Global Fund and PEPFAR expect from us on the ground.

• I commit to further strengthening the relationship with donors who have protected their contributions to the Joint Programme even in these uncertain times. We are also determined to expand to a more diverse coalition of donors to UNAIDS.

• A fully funded and well implemented UBRAF is a critical investment to saving lives and protecting the dignity of the people living with or vulnerable to HIV.

Conclusion

• 2020 is a critical year for our Joint Programme as we collectively define the path to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Our revised timelines for adoption of the next strategy remain incredibly ambitious. We need the full support of all the tremendously dedicated people in UNAIDS—within our staff, our board and all our stakeholders—to make this happen. I am looking forward to bringing a draft strategy with updated 2025 targets and resources needs at the 47th PCB and seeking your steer and guidance as we finalise ahead of the special session of the PCB in March 2021. And then we will once again need your full support, as we mobilise for a bold new Political Declaration at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting in June 2021.

• Tapping into our collective knowledge, activism and partnerships—is how I want to transform UNAIDS and take us forward in this accelerated decade of action for the SDGs.

• Together we can end AIDS and be part of making history.