

NGO Delegation
TO THE **UNAIDS** PCB



THE PCB NGO DELEGATION'S COMMUNIQUE
PCB SPECIAL SESSION AND STRATEGIC
PLANNING RETREAT

28 MARCH 2019

As decided at the 43rd UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) Meeting last December 12-14, 2018, a Special Session was held on March 28, 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. The NGO Delegation was in full attendance and participated actively in the deliberations and negotiations. There were two main agenda items in the meeting: 1) Update on the prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment; bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS Secretariat; and, 2) Selection process of the next Executive Director of UNAIDS.

Update on prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment; bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS Secretariat

By Alexander Pastoors and Jules Kim



LUCY WANJIKU NJENGA, AFRICA DELEGATE

The first discussion point on the [agenda](#) of the Special Session was the Management Action Plan (MAP) that was presented by UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director Gunilla Carlsson. The MAP is a detailed plan that was drafted after the 43rd PCB Meeting as a response to the Independent Expert Panel report on harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power in the UNAIDS organisation. It draws from the management response presented last

December, but also takes into account the findings and recommendations of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA). The aim of the plan is to eliminate all forms of (sexual) harassment, bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS.

Laurie Newell of UNFPA, the Chair of the PCB Working Group to strengthen the PCB's monitoring and evaluation role on zero tolerance against harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS, presented the first findings of the Working Group. These findings were mostly aligned with the feedback from Member States, co-sponsors and the NGO Delegation. The NGO Delegation's interventions on this agenda item focused on the need for [culture change](#) within the organisation and internalising the policies that UNAIDS advocates for all over the world, and that people

living with and affected by HIV [need strong supranational institutions](#) that have the moral authority to call on others in cases of abuse of power, (sexual) harassment and bullying.

The NGO Delegation is guardedly optimistic about the Management Action Plan. We look forward to seeing how this plan will be implemented and, with the rest of the PCB, we will be monitoring regular updates on these actions over time.

Selection process of the next Executive Director of UNAIDS

By Aditia Taslim Lim and Andrew Spieldenner



ALESSANDRA NILO, LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN DELEGATE

The second major item of the Special Session was the review of the selection process of the next UNAIDS Executive Director. June 2019 will be the last PCB session for the current Executive Director, Michel Sidibe. This puts the Executive Director search on a tight time frame, and it is up to all of us to identify and encourage appropriate candidates forward. A Search Committee consisting of balanced geographical representation

of Member States, NGO Delegation, Cosponsors and UNAIDS Secretariat, was formed earlier in March 2019 as an immediate action following the 43rd PCB Meeting. The Chair of the Search Committee, Belarus, presented an update of the current process, including [the set of competencies and experience required for the candidate of Executive Director](#). Through the Bureau, the NGO Delegation has successfully included strong encouragement of women and people living with HIV applicants in the [Job Posting](#).

Many of the Member States focused on the challenge of the timeline. While we acknowledge the importance of moving forward with the search, we also recognize that UNAIDS donor funding has significantly decreased without replenishment, thus putting anyone coming in to assume the Executive Director post in a difficult position to meet the goals of ending the HIV epidemic by 2030.

As Civil Society representatives, we will be engaged with constituents globally on the search and the move forward. Overwhelmingly, our constituents have acknowledged the

need for an excellent manager and visionary leader: one that can and will deal with gender and power inequities in the work environment. In addition, the NGO Delegation has identified two interrelated priorities for the ED: that, after two male leaders, it is time for a woman to lead UNAIDS; and that because of the impact of the epidemic globally, this leader must be from the Global South. We proposed these recommendations in our [interventions](#). We also reminded the PCB that to achieve the stronger UNAIDS that we need, there should be a return or increase of donor investments.

NGO Delegation Retreat

By Wangari Tharao and Andrew Spieldenner



THE NGO DELEGATION DURING A SHARING SESSION ON THE RETREAT

The NGO Delegation held its second retreat just prior to the UNAIDS Special Session in March 2019. Since we are a global group that has to work together tightly throughout our two-three year terms, we felt that it was important to come together, build trust and develop agreed-upon goals. The retreat had three main objectives: review and refine our working process, develop strategic plans, and map out engagement with larger Civil Society (CS), UNAIDS and the PCB in

meaningful ways.

We revisited our vision and mission, as well as our core principles and code of conduct. We also had a lengthy discussion on our ways of working, particularly with regards to communication and constituency outreach and engagement.

We discussed several key issues, in partnership with other CS partners, Cosponsors, some Member States and UNAIDS Secretariat, including Deputy Directors Gunilla Carlsson and Dr. Shannon Hader (who was on her first day of work in UNAIDS) and Executive Director, Michel Sidibe. These issues include the current situation of CS globally, Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and the policy discussions on key populations, such as human rights and civil society engagement. Through these discussions, we were able to develop shared understandings and concerns on how the changing HIV landscape impacts our region(s) and our constituencies. We were also able to discuss our own backgrounds in HIV, CS and our

regions. Finally, as CS representatives, we acknowledged that we are pulled in several directions at once and it is important to prioritize our energies.

On our last day, which was intended for the work planning, we had to restructure the programme, as we had Delegates who had to leave in the afternoon to attend a meeting at UNAIDS. However, the retreat ended rather abruptly with the injury of Wangari Tharao, our North American Delegate. This incident caused the Delegation and the Secretariat to come together in unexpected ways. After Wangari had a serious fall, we realized someone with French-speaking skills would be needed to help with the emergency medical services. Wangari was whisked by an ambulance to a French hospital and was accompanied by our Europe Delegate,

Alexander Pastoors, who stayed with her for the rest of the day and into the night. The situation was communicated immediately to the Secretariat and Dr. Joy Backory, who is the liaison person of the Governance Team for the NGO Delegation, went to the hospital, engaged the clinical staff and supported Wangari and Alexander through the ordeal. Fortunately, Dr Backory is multilingual and a trained physician - and the prognosis and treatment were easily clarified. The next day, Wangari, with her hand in a sling and badly in need of painkillers, gave one of the closing interventions of the day - calling out to countries to return their financial investment to previous levels in order to fully support the organization's incoming Executive Director meet the mandate of a fully revitalized UNAIDS. Through it all, Wangari recognized the importance of the support we build together in the NGO Delegation.



**WANGARI BEING ASSISTED TO THE
AMBULANCE**