



UNITED NATIONS
SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN
“HIV/AIDS: A CALL TO ACTION”

AT THE AFRICAN SUMMIT ON HIV/AIDS,
TUBERCULOSIS AND OTHER RELATED INFECTIOUS DISEASES
ABUJA, NIGERIA • 24-27 APRIL 2001

Building on Global Efforts

The Secretary-General’s call to action on HIV/AIDS builds on many efforts over the past years to tackle the epidemic, notably the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa. It seeks to better coordinate and intensify the substantial global work of those United Nations agencies engaged in fighting AIDS, especially the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and its Co-sponsors.

International Partnership against AIDS in Africa

The devastating scale and wider dimensions of the AIDS crisis in Africa are now well recognized. So is the need to mount an extraordinary response. There has emerged in African countries a much stronger determination to act decisively against the epidemic.

In July 1999, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Algiers approved a resolution endorsing the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa (IPAA). Three months later, the Executive Director of UNAIDS and the OAU Secretary-General signed an official Cooperation Agreement to foster collaboration and partnership in the response to AIDS in Africa.

The Partnership is best described as a coalition of five constituencies — African governments, the United Nations, bilateral donors, and the private and community sectors — working to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa. The Partnership approach promises to magnify the contribution of all involved,

while giving a clear leadership role to African governments.

Recognizing the need for a global united front to combat the epidemic, African Heads of State requested the OAU Secretary-General to work with UNAIDS in implementing the Partnership. Indeed, it is that response that has spotlighted the huge opportunities for a scaled-up international effort.

Among the first to recognize this was the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In December 1999, he gave a major boost to the Partnership when he assembled representatives from its five constituent groups and urged them to respond on a scale that matched the momentous challenge of AIDS. He told them:

“This is the first gathering of all the partners who need to come together to build a comprehensive response. Amazingly, it is the first time in the fight against AIDS that members of African Governments have sat down together with the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) donors; with the private sector and foundations; and with members of international civil society....It is an opportunity to move beyond flag-waving, boundary-setting and turf-squabbling into working together in a truly coordinated response, at the country level as well as in formulating global strategy.”

In the short period of 15 months, much has already been achieved, at the national, regional and international levels. Currently, IPAA activities range from mobilizing political leadership, developing and implementing

national strategic plans, and empowering communities, to marshalling resources, establishing funding and debt relief programmes, and ensuring access to care initiatives and partnership mechanisms. (For more information, see www.unaids.org.)

United Nations Response to AIDS

In 1996, to mobilize the main United Nations agencies in a coordinated response and individually in their respective areas of work, the United Nations drew together six agencies — the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank — in a joint and co-sponsored programme, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). A seventh, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), joined in 1999.

UNAIDS Co-sponsors have made significant progress in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into their programmes, and AIDS is now an institutional priority in the respective organizations. Collectively, UNAIDS Co-sponsors and the UNAIDS secretariat have established a joint budget

and work plan and are developing a United Nations system-wide strategic plan on HIV/AIDS. Cooperation with other United Nations organizations and agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Food Programme (WFP), is also expanding.

(For details on how each UN agency contributes to the fight against AIDS, see the Secretary-General's report for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, at www.un.org/ga/aids.)

The principal avenue of United Nations support to national-level AIDS responses is provided by United Nations Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS, made up of Co-sponsoring and other agencies, bilateral donors, NGOs and representatives of the host country. Working through the United Nations resident coordinator system, Theme Groups — guided by national priorities and by Governments — support national efforts to curb the epidemic by working together on joint programme design and planning, monitoring and resource mobilization, while increasing their own HIV/AIDS activities.