

**SIDS Conference**

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PROTOCOL

On behalf of the World Health Organisation, it is a privilege for me to be here at the SIDS Conference.

The world has witnessed the colossal tragedy that hit the region by the Tsunami. This is a tragic moment that all of us present join our hearts and mind to show our sympathy and concern to the victims and their families.

The world community has to take cognizance on the level of pandemic risks depending on how widespread the Avian Flu takes its course in the affected region. Any activity that spreads the Avian Influenza run the risk of increasing the possibility of the emergence of a pandemic virus.

Just as vulnerable people need special attention, so do vulnerable countries.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is another social tragedy that is being faced by all populations regardless of our origin, sex and race. HIV/AIDS knows no boundaries and is present in all countries of the world since it first showed its presence in the early 1980s.

The number of people living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) rose in 2004 to reach the highest level ever: an estimated 39.4 million people are living with the virus.

The number has been rising in every region compared to two years ago with the steepest increase occurring in East Asia, and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The epidemics in Sub-Saharan Africa appear to be stabilizing generally with HIV prevalence at around 7.4% for the entire region. But such a summary perspective hides important aspects.

HIV prevalence in the Caribbean is the second highest in the world exceeding 2% in five countries and AIDS has become the leading cause of death among adults in this region.

HIV/AIDS is a social tragedy with a medical outcome and socio-economic sequelae. It is in this perspective that at the outset, the WHO which is mandated to act as the coordinating and directing authority on International Health set up a body to advise governments on the 'gold standards' in matters of public health concerning HIV/AIDS.

Today, jointly with UNAIDS, WHO is spearheading the 3 x 5 initiative to scale up provision of treatment to 3 million AIDS patients with the therapy by 2005 — meaning by the end of the year. The Director General of the World Health Organisation, Dr. Jong Wook Lee has also added the 3 x 1 principle to focus on 3 frameworks:

- (1) action framework**
- (2) coordination framework and**
- (3) monitoring and evaluation framework.**

The UNAIDS and WHO are facing a Herculean task in this objective because of shortage of

- **Skilled human resources**
- **G3 Inadequacy of health systems**
- **GI Poor logistics support at field level**
- **and the scale of financial resources needed to put in place all the requirements**

We must not relent in our efforts to reach the target for treatment and to accelerate HIV/AIDS prevention well beyond December 2005. WHO is committed to its mission to mobilize all the human and material resources needed in support of the scale of operations to contain and to stem the spread of the epidemic.

WHO throughout the 6 regions and all the Country Offices are working closely with other UN Partners and stakeholders with national authorities and the Civil Society to bring support wherever possible.

The antiretroviral therapy was hailed in the 1990s as a triumph of modern science. Experts and the media proclaimed that the defeat of AIDS had begun. At last hope began to dawn. Early death was no longer inevitable.

Soon, it became clear that optimism was misplaced. The contrast between developed countries and the developing countries was simply staggering. Those living in developing countries have not reaped the same benefits. The epidemic continues to spread destroying individuals, families and societies.

The International Community has no choice but to do everything in its power to stop the AIDS pandemic. It is clearly a moral obligation and beyond that, it is a right for individuals to have access to treatment under the charter of human rights.

Failure to take action now will leave us not only with a guilt of unfinished agenda but also will result in millions of deaths which could have been avoided. Discrimination in recognizing the victims and inequity in the provision of care and treatment must come to an end.

Women and children are especially vulnerable as the Secretary-General of the United Nations Systems in his message on World AIDS Day 2004 on the theme Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS hailed women as most courageous creative champions in the fight against HIV/AIDS. He stressed that, what is needed is real, positive change that will give more power and confidence to women and girls.

Recognizing that good health is critical to the sustainable development and SIDS, WHO is working very closely with Governments on Communicable Diseases and Non-Communicable Diseases for

- ◆ **Capacity building**
- ◆ **Laboratory support for diagnosing cases**
- ◆ **Counseling as the first line treatment**
- ◆ **Scaling up the 3 x 5 initiative**
- ◆ **Using all the resources to top up with the Global Fund to fight TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS, and advising on the best surveillance mechanism for public health that is currently known.**

◆ **Consolidate a Global Outbreak and Alert Response Network.**

For the year 2005, the Global Fund needs \$2.3 billion to meet current commitments alone. This figure will increase to \$3.4 billion by 2006 and will double again before 2010.

We believe that we need to scale up our efforts and be more pro-active at ground level so that we fight HIV/AIDS in all its dimensions including the poverty trapped individuals and families.

The test of scientific prowess lies in the extent that we are able to manage and contain the epidemic in the next two decades.

As Benjamin Franklin famously said, 'If we don't hang together, we most assuredly will hang separately.' WHO hereby therefore pledges to work together with you. We will continue to ensure that WHO is with you at the forefront of efforts to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS.

We can set standards, provide technical support and coordinate international cooperation. These activities help to give the world the security, the justice and the unity it so badly needs today.

Thank you.