



Joint Statement on “Follow-up to UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board Meeting”

*Item 5: UNICEF report on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Programme
Coordinating Board of UNAIDS*

Executive Board of UNICEF

First Regular Session

H.E. James Larsen, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

7 February 2024

Check against delivery

Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and my own country, Australia.

Thank you for the update on **UNICEF** contributions to the HIV/AIDS response, and the key issues facing the **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS**.



We welcome the significant efforts carried out by UNICEF and UNAIDS in the global fight against HIV and AIDS as outlined in the report.

We are now seeing the lowest number of new HIV infections in decades, and the number of AIDS-related deaths has significantly declined. This includes reduced infections and deaths among children, adolescents, and young people.

The annual number of new mother-to-child HIV infections has fallen by more than 75 per cent since 2000.

3.4 million HIV infections in children were averted since 2000.

However, as the report makes clear, much more must be done if we are to end AIDS as a public health threat and achieve the SDGs by 2030.

In 2022, AIDS claimed one life every minute.



4 in 10 infants with HIV missed out on a timely diagnosis, and treatment coverage rates were much lower among children and adolescents compared to adults.

In some regions, girls and women were affected disproportionately. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls and young women accounted for more than 77 per cent of new infections among young people.

In Southeast Asia and the Pacific, young people accounted for around 25% of new HIV infections.

Chair,

We are deeply concerned that progress has been particularly stagnant for key populations.

Political, legal, and human rights barriers, shrinking civic space, the denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and inadequate investment in programming are fundamental constraints to our progress.



Stigma and discrimination, gender-based violence, and social, economic, and gender inequalities, also put key populations at heightened risk of HIV infection.

Young key populations continue to be especially at risk.

In this regard, we particularly appreciated the thematic session of the fifty-second meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB).

This session shone a spotlight on the inequalities that have prevented progress for key populations, especially transgender people, in HIV/AIDS responses.

It was followed by a consensus decision at the fifty-third meeting of the PCB, which included specific commitments to transgender people and actions to be taken by Member States.

We welcome that UNICEF is reducing stigma and tackling the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that perpetuate the AIDS epidemic.



We would also like to take the opportunity to note the broad spectrum of outputs and results achieved by UNICEF as highlighted in the report. It included:

- HIV treatment services for children and adolescents into primary health care,
- access to HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health services,
- technical support to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV,
- data collection and analysis to focus interventions where they have the biggest impact, and
- increased support for community-led interventions.

Crucially, the Joint Programme's Secretariat and Co-Sponsors must be appropriately resourced.

UNICEF and UNAIDS should continue to deliver on their mandates on HIV, supported by effective prioritisation and sustainability planning towards a long-term vision for the Programme to 2030 and beyond.



Considering declining HIV financing, we call on UNICEF to continue safeguarding HIV-specialised staff within the organisation. We also welcome the MOPAN assessment of the UNAIDS Secretariat.

Chair,

We underscore the indispensable role played by young people in the HIV response.

We would like to ask two questions:

First, how is UNICEF partnering with affected populations, adolescents, and young people in the HIV response?

And second, how can UNICEF strengthen youth-led advocacy, leadership, and empowerment in this effort?

While the fight against HIV/AIDS is far from over, we have seen significant developments in our lifetimes to combat this epidemic.



These gains reinforce the need for a fit-for-purpose and resilient Joint Programme and a targeted strategy, underpinned by effective coordination to maximise impact.

Together, we must maintain our ambition and efforts to end AIDS by 2030.

Thank you.

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