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EU statement
on World AIDS Day 2009
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Today, on the World Aids Day 2009, the European Union remembers and honours all women, men, children and young people who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, and reaffirms its commitments to all those who today live with HIV/AIDS or are affected in other ways by the disease.

The European Union also stresses today the need to further strengthen the response to HIV/AIDS, at national and international levels, by all partners, private, public, civil society and international organisations taking into account the need for a broader participation by all stakeholders in partner countries. The forthcoming World AIDS Conference in Vienna in 2010 will be an important opportunity in our common endeavour to achieve this aim.

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom

The European Union remains committed to continue playing a vital and leading role in this strengthened response, through a stronger action and policy engagement and in full collaboration with partner countries and on the basis of our common values of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for democratic principles, country ownership and gender equality as well as joint commitments laid down in the European Consensus on Development, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action and other relevant declarations, agreements, conclusions and established EU positions.

The EU reaffirms its strong support for and commitments to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, as well as the key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action agreed at ICPD +5 and the Copenhagen Declaration and Action Programme, and **[...]** reaffirms that expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and health services are essential for achieving the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The EU emphasizes that HIV/AIDS continue to pose a threat to development and the lives, health and well-being of individuals, in particular of women and children. There is therefore a need to integrate HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) into policies and programmes, at local, regional and international levels. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in particular to be able to say no to unsafe sex and protect themselves from infections is crucial.

Furthermore, the EU recalls the overall need for support in strengthening health systems, including local, public, private and community-based health services, and for long-term effective initiatives to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care by 2010 and the health related MDGs targets by 2015.

I. The EU calls for particular attention to the following priority actions:

– promoting full adherence to human rights; the right not to be subjected to stigma and discrimination must be guaranteed; restrictions on entry, stay and residence based on HIV status must be lifted; decriminalization of homosexuality is also important;

– greater involvement of civil society and private sector in the planning of strategies and programmes of affected communities, in particular people living with HIV/AIDS;

– key populations at risk must be seen and recognized, their voices must be heard, their needs must be met and their rights must be protected; this is relevant for all men and women, children and young people, regardless of HIV-status, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, creed and ethnicity or any other status;

– an acceleration of scaling up of evidence-based, comprehensive HIV prevention policies and programmes, based on analysis of the local drivers of the pandemic and addressing the specific needs of women, young people and key populations at risk;

– enabling access to the full range of services and commodities necessary for prevention, treatment, care and support, including comprehensive life skills and sex education for adolescents, male and female condoms and HIV harm reduction programmes in line with relevant UN recommendations[1].

– strengthened global attention and action plans to address gender inequality, in particular those related to women's and girls' rights; effective HIV/AIDS policy programs and services for women and girls should be developed, including those related to SRHRs;

– promoting and supporting the enactment and enforcement of legislation to uphold and fully protect women's rights and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS; sex and age-disaggregated data should be developed and used in reporting; all forms of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and cutting and other harmful practices, should be confronted;

– changing gender norms by addressing the traditional role of women and men, and the relationship between them, observing the special needs of boys and men and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS;

– better integration of HIV services into other comprehensive health services, in particular tuberculosis services; a recognition of SRHRs as an essential component of HIV/AIDS programs and HIV prevention efforts, and vice-versa;

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[1] UNAIDS/UNODC/WHO's "Technical Guide for countries to set targets for Universal Access to prevention, treatment and care for injecting drug users"

– continued support for prevention, diagnostics and treatment, in particular, selection, production capacity, affordability and access to female condoms as well as the provision of safe, accessible and affordable medicines;

– further emphasis on social protection systems, including social insurance systems and the provision of home-based care, to facilitate comprehensive care and support for men, women, and children affected and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS;

– enhanced efforts to enable an effective and sustainable country response through long term and predictable investments in HIV research and development of new tools and interventions, in particular in new preventive technologies such as vaccines and microbicides.

II. Doing More:

The European Union reaffirms:

– the significance of MDG 6 in attaining all the MDGs and the close links and mutual interdependence of MDG 4, 5 and 6;

– that the EU will continue to lead the global efforts to sustain financial commitments in the response to HIV/AIDS and support scaling up towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

III. Doing better:

The European Union emphasizes:

– the urgency to address prevention, treatment, care and support and other areas lagging behind; underlining the critical importance of an effective, balanced and comprehensive response in terms of access to prevention, treatment, care and support;

– the need for major improvements in national health system performance, including through addressing human resource issues in the health sector;

– that budget support has the potential of being an important tool for improving health services, but also that its effectiveness in addressing the needs of the poorer sections of the population should further be increased.

IV. Working together:

The European Union will:

– better harmonize with and align to national priorities, plans, budgets and systems in cooperation with other development partners;

– take steps to strengthen political and policy dialogues with partner countries at all levels, through an effective division of labour amongst partners, sharing of tools, joint capacity building and a better involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS;

– strengthen cooperation with non-state actors, with private/public partnerships such as GFATM[1] and with international organizations, in particular UNAIDS[2] and its ten co-sponsoring agencies;

– establish EU Action Teams as a vehicle for the Commission and Member States to join action in established priority areas.

Today, the European Union pledges to move forward, on the basis of achievements made while recognising that the work is far from complete. The EU remains committed to continue being a leader in the global response to HIV/AIDS, a response based on and rooted in the full respect for all human rights, human rights for all.

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[1] The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria - http://www.theglobalfund.org/

[2] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS - http://www.unaids.org/