

HIV/AIDS: confronting the epidemic

The Fifty-third World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report by the Director-General on HIV/AIDS;

Noting with deep concern that nearly 34 million people worldwide are currently living with HIV/AIDS, and 95% are in developing countries; and that the development gains of the past 50 years, including the increase in child survival and in life expectancy, are being reversed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic;

Further noting that in sub-Saharan Africa, where over 23 million people are infected, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death, and where more women are now infected than men; and that HIV infection is increasing rapidly in Asia, particularly in south and south-east Asia, where 6 million people are infected;

Recalling resolution WHA52.19 which *inter alia* requests the Director-General:

to cooperate with Member States, at their request, and with international organizations in monitoring and analysing the pharmaceutical and public health implications of relevant international agreements, including trade agreements, so that Member States can effectively assess and subsequently develop pharmaceutical and health policies and regulatory measures that address their concerns and priorities, and are able to maximize the positive and mitigate the negative impact of those agreements;

Recognizing that poverty and inequality between men and women are driving the epidemic; and that denial, discrimination and stigma continue to be major obstacles to an effective response to the epidemic;

Underlining the need to advocate respect for human rights in the implementation of all measures to respond to the epidemic;

Acknowledging that political commitment is essential to deal with a problem of this magnitude;

Recognizing that resources devoted to combating the epidemic both at national and international levels are not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem;

Recalling United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/36 on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), which stresses, *inter*

alia, governments' responsibility to intensify all efforts in combating AIDS through multisectoral action;

Recalling the recent session of the United Nations Security Council devoted to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, in which the Security Council recognized that HIV/AIDS is a unique modern-day plague that threatens the political, economic and social stability of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to match their political commitment, as demonstrated in several recent initiatives of political leaders of Member States, to the magnitude of the problem by allocating an appropriate national and donor budget for HIV/AIDS prevention as well as for care and support of the infected and affected;

(2) to establish programmes to combat poverty with the support of donors, implement them in a rigorous and transparent manner, and advocate:

- cancellation of debt in order to free resources for, *inter alia*, HIV/AIDS prevention and care, as proposed by the G8 Summit at Cologne,
- improvement of the living conditions of populations,
- reduction of unemployment,
- improvement of the standard of public health;

(3) to provide increased support for UNAIDS, and WHO as one of its cosponsors, in their efforts against AIDS, including efforts in the context of the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa;

(4) to strengthen public education on HIV/AIDS and to pay particular attention to national strategic plans directed at reducing the vulnerability of women, children and adolescents, bearing in mind that public education and national campaigns should place emphasis on prevention, on reducing discrimination and stigmatization, and on promoting healthy environments to prevent and alleviate AIDS problems;

(5) to take all necessary measures to protect children infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS from all forms of discrimination, stigma, abuse and neglect, in particular protecting their access to health, education and social services;

(6) to apply experiences and lessons learned and the growing body of scientific knowledge regarding proven effective interventions for prevention and care in order to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and to increase the quality and length of life of those infected;

(7) to ensure that blood transfusion services do not constitute an HIV risk factor by ensuring that all individuals have access to safe blood and blood products that are accessible and adequate to meet their needs, are obtained from voluntary, nonremunerated blood donors, are transfused only when necessary, and are provided as part of a sustainable blood transfusion programme within the existing health care system;

- (8) to build and strengthen partnerships between health providers and the community, including nongovernmental organizations, in order to direct community resources towards proven effective interventions;
- (9) to implement key strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention, in particular management of sexually transmitted infections and promotion of safer sex, including by ensuring availability of male and female condoms;
- (10) to strengthen health systems that ensure adequate and skilled human resources, supply systems and financing schemes in order to address the needs for HIV/AIDS care and prevention;
- (11) to take steps to reduce use of illicit substances and to protect injecting drug users and their sexual partners against HIV infection;
- (12) to increase access to, and quality of, care in order to improve quality of life, assure the dignity of the individual, and meet the medical and psychosocial needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, including treatment and prevention of HIV-related illnesses and provision of a continuum of care, with efficient referral mechanisms between home, clinic, hospital and institution;
- (13) to reaffirm their commitment to previous resolutions on the revised drug strategy and to ensure the necessary actions within their national drug policies to guarantee public health interests and equitable access to care, including medicines;
- (14) to make use of indicators developed by WHO to monitor progress;
- (15) to collaborate with the WHO Secretariat and other international agencies to regularly update existing databases in order to provide Member States with information on prices of essential drugs including HIV-related drugs;
- (16) to increase access to treatment and prophylaxis of HIV-related illnesses through measures such as ensuring the provision and affordability of drugs, including a reliable distribution and delivery system; implementation of a strong generic drug policy; bulk purchasing; negotiation with pharmaceutical companies; appropriate financing systems; and encouragement of local manufacturing and import practices consistent with national laws and international agreements acceded to;
- (17) to define and affirm their role and, where appropriate, engage in partnerships and solidarity initiatives to make prophylactic and therapeutic drugs accessible, affordable and safely and effectively used, whether intended for prevention of mother-to-child transmission, prevention and treatment of opportunistic diseases, or antiretroviral treatment for patients;
- (18) to establish or to expand counselling services and voluntary confidential HIV-testing in order to encourage health-seeking behaviour and to act as an entry point for prevention and care;
- (19) to continue research on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and to integrate interventions for it into primary health care, including reproductive health services, as part of comprehensive care for HIV-infected pregnant women and postnatal follow-up for them and for their families, ensuring that such research is free from interests that might bias the results and that commercial involvement should be clearly disclosed;

(20) to promote research on behaviour change and cultural factors that influence sexual behaviour;

(21) to establish and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, including epidemiological and behavioural surveillance and assessment of the response of health systems to the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, with the promotion of intercountry subregional collaboration;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to continue strengthening the involvement of WHO, as a cosponsor of UNAIDS, in the United Nations system-wide response to HIV/AIDS, including at country level;

(2) to develop a global health-sector strategy for responding to the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections as part of the United Nations system's strategic plan for HIV/AIDS for 2001-2005, and to report on progress in development of the strategy to the Executive Board at its 107th session;

(3) to give priority in WHO's regular budget to the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, and to engage the Organization as an active partner in the implementation of a transparent and joint resource mobilization strategy in support of the unified budget and work plan of the UNAIDS Secretariat and its cosponsors, and to actively encourage the donor community to increase support for regional and country-level interventions;

(4) to further mobilize funds in support of national HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes and for care and support given through the home and community-level programmes;

(5) to further support the implementation of drug price monitoring systems in Member States, at their request, with a view to the promotion of equitable access to care, including essential drugs;

(6) to strengthen Member States' capacity for the implementation of drug monitoring systems in order to better identify adverse reactions and misuse of drugs within health systems, thus promoting a rational use of drugs;

(7) to continue the development of methods and support for monitoring the pharmaceutical and public health implications of trade agreements;

(8) to involve WHO fully in the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa, as well as other programmes against HIV/AIDS in other Member States, particularly at country level, within the context of national strategic plans;

(9) to cooperate with Member States in organizing nationally coordinated blood-transfusion services;

(10) to collaborate with Member States in strengthening the capacity of health systems both to respond to the epidemics through integrated prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections and care for infected people and to promote health systems research to frame policy on health systems' response to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections;

- (11) to advocate respect for human rights in the implementation of all measures responding to the epidemic;
- (12) to intensify the support of national efforts against HIV/AIDS, aimed at providing assistance to children infected or affected by the epidemic, focusing particularly in the worst-hit regions of the world and where the epidemic is severely setting back national development gains;
- (13) to appeal to the international community, relevant United Nations agencies, donor agencies and programmes, and intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations to also give importance to the treatment and rehabilitation of children infected with HIV/AIDS, to invite them to consider further involving the private sector;
- (14) to ensure that WHO, together with the UNAIDS Secretariat and other interested UNAIDS cosponsors, pursue proactively and effectively its dialogue with the pharmaceutical industry, in conjunction with Member States and associations of persons living with HIV/AIDS, to make HIV/AIDS-related drugs increasingly accessible to developing countries through drug development, cost reduction, and strengthening of reliable distribution systems;
- (15) to reinforce, promote, and explore partnerships both to make HIV/AIDS-related drugs accessible through affordable prices, appropriate financing systems, and effective health care systems and to ensure that drugs are safely and effectively used;
- (16) to cooperate with governments, at their request, and other international organizations on possible options under relevant international agreements, including trade agreements, to improve access to HIV/AIDS-related drugs;
- (17) to promote, encourage and support research and development on: vaccines appropriate for strains of HIV found in both developed and developing countries; diagnostic tools and antimicrobial drugs for other sexually transmitted infections; and treatment for HIV/AIDS, including traditional medicine;
- (18) to intensify efforts to prevent HIV and sexually transmitted infections in women, including promotion of research on and development of microbicides and affordable female condoms to provide women and girls with female-initiated protection methods;
- (19) to continue, in the context of efforts under way with UNICEF, UNFPA and the UNAIDS Secretariat, to provide technical support to Member States for implementation of strategies and programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and to improve capacity for intersectoral collaboration;
- (20) to provide support to Member States for collecting and analysing information on the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, developing methodologies for behavioural surveillance, and producing periodic updates;
- (21) to provide increased support to Member States for the prevention of HIV transmission in injecting drug users in order to avoid an explosive spread of HIV/AIDS in that vulnerable population;
- (22) to advocate for research on nutrition in relation to HIV/AIDS;

(23) to advise Member States on the appropriate treatment regimen for HIV/AIDS and to advise in collaboration with other relevant international organizations on the management, legal and regulatory issues to improve affordability and accessibility;

(24) to appeal to bilateral and multilateral partners to simplify the procedures for the allocation of resources.

Eighth plenary meeting, 20 May 2000
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