

GETTING TO ZERO: TIME TO SHAPE OUR DESTINY

M. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS
13 December 2011
Geneva, Switzerland
**29th Meeting of the Programme
Coordinating Board**

Getting to zero: Time to shape our destiny

Michel Sidibé

29th Meeting of the
Programme Coordinating Board
13 December 2011



Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

Madam Chair, Vice Chair, Honourable Ministers, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning and welcome to the 29th meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.

Let me set the stage for my report by quoting the American statesman William Jennings Bryan:

“Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice.

It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.”

For us, that destiny is zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

A year ago, with your leadership and guidance, we put together a strategy for *Getting to Zero*. It was both a vision and a road map. And six months ago, despite severe economic difficulties in the world, we achieved together an historic Political Declaration forged at the UN High Level Meeting on AIDS. As never before, the concept of shared values and shared responsibility has become a reality.

This past World AIDS Day, from Argentina to Zanzibar, we saw our vision of getting to zero being assimilated and transformed into local community goals.

I returned from Addis Ababa last week rejuvenated with hope. A record 10 300 participants were at the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) from 107 countries. They were asking for more progress, and to ensure available resources would be used more efficiently to scale up the impressive results achieved to date.

We have recently heard many of the world’s most prominent leaders speak about the beginning of the end, getting to zero and the real possibility of an AIDS-free generation: US Secretary of State Clinton, US President Obama, Premier Wen of China, President Zuma of South Africa and UK Prime Minister Cameron—all have taken up these themes of hope. At the recent summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 10 Heads of State adopted a bold declaration on achieving the three zeros.

Let us all be proud. A year ago, skeptics said that getting to zero was just a slogan. But countries, partners and people around the world have embraced the vision and are now working to translate it into reality.

Our vision of zero has truly come to life and grown legs.

Making progress despite tough times

Since our June Board meeting, UNAIDS has been deeply focused on transforming the AIDS response so that all paths lead to zero. The Board was right to ask the Joint Programme to focus on a specific set of outcome-oriented goals and targets.

This focused approach is perhaps the single most important factor in successfully galvanizing the world to recommit to the global AIDS response.

The goals have inspired a new unity of purpose, a resolve to focus on results and an interest in clear roles for UNAIDS—our Cosponsors, our partners and ourselves.

Our new World AIDS Day report, *Faster. Smarter. Better.*, demonstrates that even amid financial crisis, we are producing results. I was proud to launch this report in Berlin with the German Federal Minister of Health and the Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development.

The political optimism for progress in the AIDS response is underpinned by the latest scientific breakthroughs. Research confirmed some months ago that treatment *is* prevention, and can reduce HIV transmission dramatically. Now we are seeing that evidence in action. In Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Zimbabwe, scaling up to universal access to treatment has accelerated the decline in new HIV infections. We also saw the launch of the credit-card size mChip test kit for HIV and other diseases, with a price tag of only one dollar.

However, I am very concerned about the study published in *The Lancet* in October indicating that women's use of injectable hormonal contraceptives may significantly increase their risk of becoming infected. Following the meeting WHO plans to convene on this issue, UNAIDS will work with our Cosponsors and key partners on how these results should be addressed and communicated to countries.



Countries are making bold progress on HIV and human rights

Let me congratulate Armenia and Fiji for lifting HIV-related travel restrictions since our last meeting. The Government of Kenya has introduced an HIV Equity Tribunal—a first for Africa—which is providing access to justice for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against or criminalized. I was very pleased that members of the PCB were able to see examples of Kenya's progress firsthand during the Board's recent field visit to that country, which included a trip to the Millennium Village in Sauri.

While visiting Chengdu, China, I was proud to see bold and innovative HIV prevention programmes for vulnerable populations. A few years ago, China had a policy of zero tolerance for people who used drugs, and new infections among this population were escalating. Today, China has made methadone maintenance widely available in one of the largest harm reduction programmes in Asia. Another programme, implemented by civil society and local government, is providing lifesaving prevention services for men who have sex with men.

There is still much work needed to strengthen the links between the AIDS response, human rights and social justice. I am very concerned about how the national AIDS response can be maintained in countries in transition, like Egypt, Libya, South Sudan and Tunisia. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the number of new infections among injecting drug users continues to rise.

Smart investments in the AIDS response must fall on fertile ground, and not be undermined by bad laws and policies. I am grateful that this Board will consider a high-level session on the legal environment in countries and on how it affects HIV prevention and treatment services. The Commission on HIV and the Law is completing its work, and I look forward to seeing its final report and recommendations that will help countries to address laws and improve access to justice for vulnerable populations.

The United Kingdom and the United States have also announced that foreign assistance programmes would consider the situation of human rights for the most vulnerable in making decisions about aid to countries.

Link between science and social change

Today, I am proud to see how the AIDS response is fostering the link between science and social change. In KwaZulu Natal in South Africa—with one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world—I saw how communities are using HIV as an entry point to provide families with access to services for education, paediatric care, tuberculosis, cervical and breast cancer screening and even dentistry. For the first time in more than 200 years, a Zulu King, His Majesty Goodwill Zwelethini, is promoting voluntary medical male circumcision among Zulu men and boys.

In October, UNAIDS convened a round table with African researchers, planners and implementers at CAPRISA on bringing breakthroughs in science to people. We are fortunate to have Professor Salim Abdool Karim and Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim here with us at the PCB, and I encourage everyone to attend their session on CAPRISA tomorrow.

AIDS response as entry point

UNAIDS continues to leverage the AIDS response as an entry point for larger health and development goals, as with our engagement in the high-level launch of the Pink Ribbon-Red Ribbon Alliance in Washington, D.C. I was honoured to join President George W. Bush and Secretary Clinton at this high-profile demonstration of America's bipartisan support for AIDS, and our shared resolve that women who are already suffering from HIV should not die from cervical cancer.

At the UN High Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases, HIV programmes were recognized as the first large-scale chronic disease response from which lessons and models could be drawn. Similarly, AIDS was identified as a pathfinder for addressing the social determinants of health at the World Conference in Rio in October.

I am very pleased with the exciting momentum building in the 22 priority countries of the Global Plan to eliminate new HIV infections among children and keep their mothers alive (Global Plan). With PEPFAR and other partners, we are seeing more and more countries launching national plans for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission, including in Ethiopia, where I was privileged to participate in their launch last week. With your continued dedication, we will reach zero babies born with HIV by 2015. But you are not in this alone.



It is time for the international community to respond to your leadership. We need to work together to ensure that these plans are funded. This is now the most urgent task facing the Global Steering Group of the Global Plan.

We are seeing a growing enthusiasm among young people to become the new generation of leaders who will take us to zero. They are using the tools of social media to maximum effect. Through our crowdsourcing project, CrowdOutAIDS, young leaders are shaping UNAIDS' new youth strategy online, in real time.

The private sector remains a key partnership priority for UNAIDS—and an incredibly powerful one. Through our global partnership with Standard Bank, we encouraged thousands of people to be tested for HIV in Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda on World AIDS Day. Sir Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin Atlantic, “tweeted” on behalf of UNAIDS’ World AIDS Day Campaign, “Be an Activist,” to reach millions of supporters. I hope many of you saw the full-page ad, “AIDS is going to lose” from Chevron and UNAIDS in newspapers around the world. Our partnership with Xinhua News agency extended the reach of UNAIDS public service announcements from Times Square to Tiananmen Square and beyond.

BRICS role in global governance

UNAIDS is engaging the BRICS countries to take a larger role in the governance of the global AIDS response. I have conducted official visits to all five of these countries since we last met. In Beijing, WHO and UNAIDS united BRICS Ministers of Health to articulate a new agenda for South-South cooperation to expedite innovation for health technologies.

Our partnership with the Russian Government was key to the success of the MDG 6 Forum in Moscow, which featured unprecedented engagement with senior Russian leaders in the AIDS response, and launched the ambitious Action Plan for MDG6 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

We are seeing impressive results in India, which has the third largest number of people living with HIV in the world. A recent World Bank study has shown that in the last 10 years, India has averted about 3 million new HIV infections and is on its way to achieve MDG 6 well before the target date of 2015.

In recent months, UNAIDS has engaged with the Indian government to ensure that quality generic medicines continue to be made available to all countries. I was so pleased when Minister of Commerce Sharma announced that he would reject any efforts to include “data exclusivity” clauses in bilateral trade agreements. At the recent Doha+10 meeting, I encouraged countries to make greater use of TRIPS flexibilities and to be wary of TRIPS+ provisions that can place limitations on innovation, domestic production of antiretroviral drugs and access to lifesaving medicines.

It was a special honour to commemorate World AIDS Day in China with Premier Wen, as well as senior ministers from the Chinese government and leading public figures. We saw the extent to which China is willing to play its part in the global AIDS response when Premier Wen announced that his country would close its gap in domestic funding. From rapid scale-up to technology transfer, China’s voice is vital as we advance a socially sustainable agenda.

Since we last met, we have been exploring how to make our new Investment Framework available to countries. The Framework aims to enable countries to pursue a more focused and results-driven use of scarce resources. It is intended to open a political space for countries to generate a wider discussion on shared values, smart investments, sustainable financing and mutual accountability.

We are also working with the World Bank to launch a major new effort to help countries strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness, financing and sustainability of their AIDS responses.

These efforts are not just for guiding joint investments and focusing scarce resources—they represent a fundamental approach to delivering greater value for money.

A new global compact

Reaching the Political Declaration targets requires a bolder, more focused, results-driven, and accountable AIDS response at country level. In the last six months, we have seen countries take major strides forward, giving us tangible examples of national ownership in motion.

Five countries in sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia and Lesotho) are now contributing a combined total of more than US\$ 2 billion per year to their domestic AIDS responses. Added to this, countries such as Angola, Gabon and Seychelles are contributing 65% or more of HIV expenditures from their own national budgets.



South Africa has fought back to build one of the biggest and most ambitious national AIDS programmes in the world, allocating more than US\$1.2 billion of domestic funding last year to support its national response.

I recently hosted a one-day consultation for representatives of the African Union, UNECA and the African Development Bank on how Africa can take the lead on this country leadership agenda. I am very grateful to Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia who agreed to convene a crisis meeting among African Heads of State to address the future of AIDS financing in the broadest context.

Let me summarize: Today, our strong vision and our *Getting to Zero* Strategy are rapidly gaining consensus. We have achieved high-level political commitment to build a new agenda that is not only financially sustainable, but socially sustainable as well.

A dark shadow

All of the pieces are in place. But still, there is a dark shadow over us—the alarming decline in international funding for HIV.

For the first time, the hopes of millions of people were put on hold with the Global Fund Board's decision to postpone Round 11.

Developments at the Global Fund over recent months are a cause of great anxiety and profound concern to me. The Global Fund is an irreplaceable partner, central to moving forward our vision and achieving the targets and commitments set by UN Member States at the High Level Meeting.

Following the report of the independent review panel and the recent Board meeting in Accra, I have given a lot of thought to what UNAIDS can do in practical terms to better support the Global Fund and implementing countries through these difficult times.

One of the most helpful and immediate things we will do is make available a small team of our most experienced and financially astute senior staff to assist countries in risk management, in bet-

ter incorporating counterpart financing and in making the money work better. Over the coming months, I will ensure that we significantly increase our support to the 20+ high-impact countries, as well as other countries where the Global Fund has a large portfolio.

We need the Global Fund to succeed. From the findings of UNAIDS' recent missions and the rapid analysis we have undertaken, it is clear that we are at a make or break point.

People who have been on treatment for years are now at risk. If the Global Fund does not continue to support the scale-up of treatment services over the next three years, our modelling suggests up to 700 000 people in sub-Saharan Africa could face death. Even if funding levels are maintained, we will face major setbacks.

This is an unacceptable price to pay for the people and countries that continue to look to the Global Fund for hope. And we will all certainly pay—not only in terms of human suffering, but in the kind of social disruption and public protest we all want to avoid.

The same applies to prevention programmes, especially for vulnerable populations. Failure to scale up to the targets of the Political Declaration would not only be ethically wrong, but short-sighted and unacceptable.

Now is not the time to halt our investments. If we do not seize the opportunity now, costs will simply escalate and zero will cease to be viable as a vision.

This is why I have renewed my call to introduce a global tax on financial transactions. If such a tax could generate US\$ 400 billion per year, we would need less than 1.5% of the revenues to close the funding gap for the entire global AIDS response. This would enable us not only to eliminate new infections in children by 2015, but also to put 15 million people on lifesaving treatment, halve the number of TB deaths in people living with HIV and much more. I am asking you to follow up with your capitals and partners to transform this call into reality before our next Board meeting.



Confidence of donors

Even during this financial crisis, confidence in the Joint Programme remains high. I am grateful to all of our donors—including six donors that increased their contributions this year—Australia, Finland, Israel, Monaco, Poland and Spain. I also want to welcome the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Turkey as important new donors to UNAIDS. Thanks to the support of our donors, UNAIDS has maintained full funding in 2011.

A transformed organization, aligned to our strategy

As countries contemplate a new Investment Framework, UNAIDS will also “walk the talk” to ensure we are fit for purpose well into the future. The *Faster. Smarter. Better.* approach also applies to UNAIDS own inner workings.

UNAIDS’ internal structure, process, resource allocation, decision making, accountability and staff expertise will harmonize with our vision, strategy and the Political Declaration targets and commitments. We will be held accountable for mobilizing our Cosponsors and partners to achieve these goals.

Earlier this year, I spoke to you about our plans to conduct a Functional Review with the intention to ensure the Secretariat can effectively drive our strategy. Over the past few months, with help from McKinsey & Company, we have taken a deep look at our organization, identifying the weaknesses we need to correct and the strengths we can build on.

Today, I would like to paint you a picture of where I intend to take the organization you have entrusted to me, as Executive Director, and the voyage it will entail.

Our overarching aims are to ensure that UNAIDS’ internal structure is aligned to our strategy and the 10 Political Declaration targets and commitments, to improve staff deployment for better results and value for money and to lower overall operating costs.

We will move away from a headquarters-centric organization to one with much greater responsibility for delivering results at regional and country level. This implies a smaller headquarters with a more focused and strategic role, stronger and more results-focused Regional Support Teams and a deeper bench of talent, especially in the 20+ high-impact countries. At the end, we aim to have 75% of UNAIDS staff in the field—versus roughly 60% today.

Together with additional efficiencies that we will implement, we expect to reduce costs by 20–25% over the coming biennium with targeted savings of US\$ 40 million. While our costs have increased as a result of the continued appreciation of the Swiss franc against the US dollar over the past year, the measures I envisage to make UNAIDS fit for the future will put us on a sound financial path and demonstrate that UNAIDS continues to be a model for delivering value for money.

These changes will make UNAIDS a reference point in terms of the size of our headquarters and the productivity of our support functions. I am convinced that the streamlining and new processes will be like a massive shot of adrenaline, giving our committed and talented staff the direction and opportunity to advance us more quickly to our destination of zero.

I want to offer my condolences to our UNAIDS colleague Bernhard Schwartlander. He is unable to be with us today due to the recent passing of his father.

I would like to close by remembering the life and work of our friend Marcel van Soest, Executive Director of the World AIDS Campaign, who passed away in September. He was a great friend to UNAIDS, a key contributor to this Board and a strong partner in our movement. His spirit will live on in our hearts.

Thank you.



Michel Sidibé
Executive Director

UNAIDS
20 AVENUE APPIA
CH-1211 GENEVA 27
SWITZERLAND

Tel.: (+41) 22 791 36 66
Fax: (+41) 22 791 48 35
e-mail: distribution@unaid.org

www.unaids.org