

UNGASS in SHARP Focus **Sexual Health and Rights and the 2006 UNGASS Review**

Editor: Susana T. Fried (susana.fried@gmail.com)

Editor's note: UNGASS in SHARP Focus is an initiative of the OSI/SHARP (sexual health and rights project). Its purpose is to provide information about key sexual health and rights issues and activities arising in the process of the UNGASS review. It is directed both toward those attending the special session and those who are not. There will be 6 issues released. The first two will be issued prior to the review, in order to provide background information about the status of negotiations and planned activities during the UNGASS. Three issues will be released during the UNGASS (May 31 – June 2), at the end of each day. Finally a wrap-up report will be issued following the end of the session. For more information or to share events, strategies and activities, please contact Susana T. Fried at susana.fried@gmail.com or Rachel Thomas, OSI/SHARP at rthomas@sorosny.org.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND INFORMATION ABOUT EVENTS, STRATEGIES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS. WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO DISSEMINATE THE INFORMATION

Issue 4: 1 June 2006

Table of contents

1. Update on today's negotiations – p. 1
2. Press releases and civil society statements in brief - p. 1-3
3. Full text of press releases and civil society statements
 - a. Statement by women's organizations – pp. 3-5
 - b. African civil society coalition on AIDS – pp. 5-7
 - c. Civil Society press release – pp. 7-10
 - d. Coalition on Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies – pp. 10-12

Today, Member States negotiating the Political Declaration spent much of the day in closed meetings and reconvened in a full informal session at 5 pm for the first full reading of the document. This new document (released at noon today) was prepared by the co-chairs, and then revised by the SGs office, the GA President and UNAIDS. The document is far stronger in terms of sexual health and rights content, and human rights more generally. However, it is also still open to extensive change through negotiation.

Civil society organizations have worked hard throughout the afternoon to provide recommendations on the document. That document has been completed and was circulated in advance of the 5 pm meeting of governments.

2. Press releases and civil society statements in brief

Many organizations have issued press releases and commentary about the structure of the negotiations process and about the content of the document. For example, a statement signed by 19 women's organizations proclaimed "We are

outraged that critical women's rights issues that are central to the goal of halting this pandemic--such as the right to health and the right to live free of sexual coercion and violence, universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and education, and protection of sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls--are still up for negotiation. We are appalled that governments are still reluctant to commit to targets and resources and to take responsibility to comprehensively protect and promote women's rights, the lack of which fuels the pandemic. Governments are backtracking on commitments they are party to including the Declaration on HIV/ AIDS adopted in 2001, and related international and regional human rights agreements and conventions." (Full text follows on p. 3.)

Another claimed that "African Negotiators lobby in bad faith at UN meeting," contending that African negotiators have resisted the inclusion of specific measures to protect and promote the human rights of vulnerable groups, including sex workers, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, adolescents and women. This refusal to acknowledge the people most affected by the global epidemic again flies in the face of the Common Position, which clearly specifies the need to support these and other groups in programmes designed to prevent and treat HIV and AIDS. The positions of the countries listed above [see full text on page 5] are particularly puzzling in light of the evidence regarding the impact of HIV and AIDS: 77% of young people living with HIV and AIDS are young women.

A press release issued on behalf of civil society organizations called for urgent action, cautioning "that there is a serious risk that the high level UN meeting to review progress and set new targets in the fight against AIDS could end in failure. Five years since the 2001 UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV, governments have failed to meet most of their targets for 2005, and are now failing to set new and ambitious targets." (See full text at p. 7.)

And *The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies* issued a statement (see full text on p. 10) calling the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) to account, commenting, "*We strongly believe that the current position taken by some OIC countries at this meeting does not represent the civil society perspectives and best practices regarding HIV/ AIDS within our countries, as well as our commitment to the universality and indivisibility of human rights.. We as non-governmental organizations, struggle on a daily basis to provide sexual and reproductive health services, reform laws that discriminate or violate human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, provide comprehensive sexuality education, combat violence against women, including marital rape and sexual abuse, reach out to and protect vulnerable groups and break the taboos associated with sexuality. Full realization of*

human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is an essential element in the global response to the pandemic."

Still in side event after side event, urgent calls are being made to address those who are most affected by HIV/AIDS, and those most targeted for human rights abuses because of HIV/AIDS, including women and girls, men who have sex with men, sex workers, drug users among others. In the morning panel on *Ending the Feminization of AIDS*, speaker after speaker stressed the inextricable link between effectively addressing HIV from a gender perspective and ensuring the promotion and protection of women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights. For example, Keesha Effs, the National Youth Ambassador for Positive Living (Jamaica) stressed the importance of eliminating colonial era laws that foster violence and discrimination against women, particularly laws that criminalize sex work. Wanda Nowicka, President of the Federation of Women and Family Planning (Poland) urged that governments ensure access to comprehensive sexuality education to all girls and boys. Moreover, she stressed that there must be zero tolerance for discrimination, stigma and violence as critical to addressing HIV/AIDS and critical to ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Meanwhile, several news outlets reported that hundreds of protesters were arrested yesterday (31 May) following a rally at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza. According to New York Daily News, "police arrested 21 advocates after they chained themselves together in the lobby of a building that houses the U.S. Mission to the U.N. The advocates carried a sign that called on the delegates of the U.N. assembly to commit more funding to 'HIV prevention based on science, not ideology,'" (Gendar, *New York Daily News*, 6/1).

4. Press releases and statements in full

a. Statement by women's organizations

WOMEN DEMAND ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY NOW!

Response from Women's Groups to the negotiations on the Political Declaration for the UNGASS Review, 2006

We, women's groups (including women living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and young women) monitoring the UNGASS Review Process, wish to express our concerns about the negotiations around the Political Declaration that is to emerge from this High Level Meeting. We strongly support and commend the role of negotiators from the Rio Group, Canada, EU, Norway, Switzerland and Nigeria in striving to retain and strengthen the commitments to women's rights made in 2001 by demanding clear targets and accountability. *However, ...*

We are outraged that critical women's rights issues that are central to the goal of halting this pandemic--such as the right to health and the right to live free of sexual coercion and violence, universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and education, and protection of sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls--are still up for negotiation. **We are appalled** that governments are still reluctant to commit to targets and resources and to take responsibility to comprehensively protect and promote women's rights, the lack of which fuels the pandemic. Governments are backtracking on commitments they are party to including the Declaration on HIV/AIDS adopted in 2001, and related international and regional human rights agreements and conventions.

We demand that governments urgently commit to; implement, resource and monitor the following actions:

- Intensify efforts to increase the capacity of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV-infection including by creating and committing adequate resources to an enabling environment for the empowerment of women;
- Protect and promote women's and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights including their rights to have control and decide freely on all matters related to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, ensuring access to comprehensive health care and health services, including male and female condoms; and invest in the fast-track development of female controlled prevention methods and microbicides.
- Ensure full access to comprehensive information and education, including sexuality education
- Strengthen women's economic independence; and reiterate the importance of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality.
- Commit to strengthening legal, policy, administrative and other measures for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful traditional practices, abuse, early and forced marriage, rape, including marital rape and other forms of sexual violence against women is addressed as an integral part of the national and international HIV/AIDS response; and providing post-exposure prophylaxis to women survivors of violence.

Governments must fully guarantee that HIV prevention, treatment, care and services are provided to all vulnerable populations, including women and girls

(especially in situations of conflicts and emergencies), active injecting drug users, children, men who have sex with men, transgenders, youth, sex workers, prisoners and migrant populations; and recognize and address the ways in which the pandemic is racialized as well as gendered across the globe.

Finally, we demand governments listen and respond to civil society, especially women's groups and women living with HIV/ AIDS, in setting of goals and priorities, the determination of funding streams and program guidance, design, planning, implementation and evaluation of HIV/ AIDS policies and programs.

Women's rights are not negotiable. ! Don't miss another opportunity! The time to act is NOW

June 1, 2006

Aahung

Actionaid International

Association for Women 's Rights in Development (AWID)

Comision Nacional de Seguimiento

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer. (FEIM)

Gender and Education Office of International Council for Adult Education (GEO-ICAE)

International Women's Health Caucus (IWHC)

International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)

International Working Group on Sexuality and Social Policy

Latin American Council of NGOs with AIDS Services (LACCASO)

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

Mujer y Salud en Uruguay. MYSU

Red latinoamericana de Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir

Red Intra-PosMuros DDHH Internacional

Secretaria Grupo de Mujeres del Argentina

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Women for Women's Human Rights- New Ways

Youth Coalition

b. African civil society coalition on AIDS

African Negotiators lobby in bad faith at UN meeting

Three weeks after the African Union - the highest decision-making regional authority in Africa - endorsed a Common Position on HIV and AIDS, African delegates in New York are renegeing on the strong commitments they made to providing access to services for HIV prevention, care and treatment to all those who need them in Africa. At the Abuja Heads of States Summit held from May 2 - 4, African states committed to:

- Reaching at least 80% of pregnant women with access to prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT);
- Ensuring that 80% of orphans and vulnerable children have access to basic services by 2010;
- Ensuring that at least 80% of those in need, especially women and children, have access to HIV/ AIDS treatment, including antiretroviral therapy as well as care and support;
- Ensuring that at least 80% of target populations have access to voluntary testing and counselling services
- Reaching at least 80% of target populations with access to condoms and the skills to use them for HIV prevention.

Although African Heads of States endorsed a strong declaration with clear targets and timeframes for fighting AIDS in Africa, bureaucrats and officials at a UN review are refusing to acknowledge these commitments.

In a surprising turn of events, and a remarkable display of bad faith, negotiators from Gabon, Egypt and South Africa refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the African Common Position, and have aligned themselves with the United States, the EU and Japan in rejecting the inclusion of targets in the UNGASS Political Declaration.

African negotiators have resisted the inclusion of specific measures to protect and promote the human rights of vulnerable groups, including sex workers, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, adolescents and women. This refusal to acknowledge the people most affected by the global epidemic again flies in the face of the Common Position, which clearly specifies the need to support these and other groups in programmes designed to prevent and treat HIV and AIDS. The positions of the countries listed above are particularly puzzling in light of the evidence regarding the impact of HIV and AIDS: 77% of young people living with HIV and AIDS are young women.

Nigeria is the only African country that has openly spoken out against the undermining of the African Common Position. Not a single other African state has followed suit, despite repeated information notes from the African Union secretariat, informing New York-based African negotiators about the existence and importance of the Common Position.

Instead, silence and apathy have mired the African bloc, and rendered the bloc of over fifty AU member states virtually silent for the duration of the negotiations.

We call on countries such as Namibia and Kenya, which have indicated to civil society that they do not agree with the position articulated by the African negotiators to do so openly. We call on all African countries to honour the commitments made at Abuja three weeks ago and to stop the bad faith negotiations being undertaken in their name.

Issued by the African Civil Society Coalition on AIDS

For more information contact:

Omolulu Falobi
omolulu@nigeria-aids.org
+1 646 578 6757

Sisonke Msimang
sisonkem@osisa.org
+27 83 450 7382

c. Civil Society press release

Today: UN Talks on AIDS Could be Headed for Failure
Press Advisory
For Immediate Release: June 1, 2006

Contact for more information: Kieran Daly (416) 275-8413 or Asia Russell (267) 475-2645/asia@healthgap.org

International Civil Society Warns High-Level UN Review on AIDS Could be Headed for Failure
New UN AIDS Declaration Could Weaken Existing Global AIDS Commitments

Civil society organizations and people living with HIV/AIDS warned today that there is a serious risk that the high level UN meeting to review progress and set new targets in the fight against AIDS could end in failure. Five years since the 2001 UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV, governments have failed to meet most of their targets for 2005, and are now failing to set new and ambitious targets. Civil society representatives will hold a media briefing today reacting to the negotiations at 11:30 in Room 226, (Media Briefing Room) at UN Headquarters. (See below for list of organizations endorsing the press briefing.)

Governments are currently negotiating a Political Declaration that should be setting a clear path to address the new realities and needs in the response to

AIDS up to 2010. Instead governments are playing political games, according to civil society.

³Avoiding controversy during these negotiations has been more important to some UN Member States than the lives of millions of people around the world who are living with HIV or at risk of infection, said Omololu Falobi of Journalists Against AIDS Nigeria. ³The global fight against AIDS will not succeed unless governments commit to ambitious HIV treatment and prevention targets; support for the human rights of vulnerable populations such as sex workers, drug users, youth, and men who have sex with men; and embrace evidence-based HIV prevention. But these clear commitments are precisely what have currently been stripped out of the document.²

The US, Japan, Australia and other governments are also refusing to include mention of the global AIDS funding gap in the Political Declaration. UNAIDS estimates that at least \$23 billion is needed annually by 2010 to finance the fight against AIDS; yet the USA, Australia and Japan have rejected the inclusion of this target.

Negotiations over a final declaration text have been marred by some governments¹ ideological positions on HIV prevention, treatment and human rights. For example, the Africa Group brought a common negotiating position to this meeting. However Gabon, as negotiators for the Africa Group, have failed to negotiate based on this text. Instead they have aligned with conservative governments such as Egypt and Syria. In the last round of informal negotiations, language advocating the empowerment of girls was rejected by Syria.

³Empowering women and girls, eliminating violence against women and defending the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all people are necessary in order to equip women with the tools they need to protect themselves against HIV infection,² said Jodi Jacobson, Executive Director of the Center for Health and Gender Equity.

The Africa Group¹s common position coming into the negotiations also called for 80% treatment and prevention coverage by 2010. Yet South Africa, the US and other governments will not accept these targets in the Political Declaration. Without time-bound, aspirational targets that define recent commitments to achieve universal access to prevention and treatment, there will be no way of measuring whether governments are responding to the real needs in the response to HIV. ³Governments are choosing political expediency over real accountability, and disregarding the basic human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and their communities,² said Laura Villa Torres of Mexico.

Many of the most important recommendations civil society activists from around the world have been advocating for over the last several months have been rejected by governments. The failure of leadership from co-Chairs of the negotiations, Thailand and Barbados, is unacceptable. Moreover the UN has allowed this to happen. ³Civil society, invited to participate in the meetings but not the negotiations, may have little choice but to walk away from this seriously flawed process if governments continue to insist on a declaration that offers nothing but a weak and compromised response in the face of a global public health crisis,² said Khensani Mavasa of Treatment Action Campaign, South Africa.

Endorsing Organizations:

AAHUNG

ACT UP NY

Action Aid International

Advocates for Yourth

AfriCASO

African Services Committee

AIDS Access Foundation

Aids Fonds

AIDS Law Project

AIDS Task Force, Africa Japan Forum

Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations(APCASO)

Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)

Blue Diamond Society

CALCSICOVA (Cordinadora de Asociacia Ves de Lucha Contra el SIDA de la

Cournida Valenciana

Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir (Brasil)

Center for AIDS Rights, Thailand

Center for Health and Gender Equity

CESIDA - Coodinadora Espanalu en Sida

Colectivo Juvenil Decide/ Bolivia

European AIDS Treatment Group

GAT-Grupo Portugues de Activistas Sobre Tratamentos de VIH/SIDA

Gender AIDS Forum

Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS Eastern Africa Region

Health & Development Networks

Health GAP (Global Access Project)

HelpAge International

HIV Association Netherlands

Housing Works, Inc

ICW Latina

International Council of AIDS Service Organisations

International HIV/ AIDS Alliance
 International Women's AIDS Caucus & FEIM
 International Working Group in Social Policies and Sexuality
 IPPF
 Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS/Nigeria)
 Namibia Network of AIDS Service Organisations (NANASO)
 National AIDS Trust (UK)
 National Association of PLWHA in Namibia (Lironga Eparu)
 National Empowerment Network of PLWHA in Kenya
 Nepal HIV/ AIDS Alliance
 New Ways
 NNIWA
 OSISA
 Positive Action Movement, Nigeria
 Positive Women's Network
 Red Latinoamericana y Caribena de Jovenes pro la Direccion Sexual
 y Reproduccion (REDLAC)
 Red Tra Sex
 RED2002 (Spain)
 RSMALC
 Rutgers Nisso Group, The Netherlands
 Sensoa V2W
 Share - Net
 Stop Aids Liberia
 Student Global AIDS Campaign
 Tenemos Sida (Spain)
 Treatment Action Group (TAG)
 Treatment Action Movement, Nigeria
 UK Coalition of People Living with HIV and aids
 Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office
 United Nations Association in Canada
 VSO
 Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)
 World AIDS Campaign
 World Population Foundation, Netherlands

d. Coalition on Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies

A CALL BY

THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES*

We, non-governmental organizations and experts from 15 countries of the Middle East, North Africa and South/Southeast Asia, believe that the 2006 High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS constitutes an occasion for reaffirming and enhancing the commitments made by our governments and the international community at the UNGASS 2001.

We strongly believe that the current position taken by some OIC countries at this meeting does not represent the civil society perspectives and best practices regarding HIV/ AIDS within our countries, as well as our commitment to the universality and indivisibility of human rights.. We as non-governmental organizations, struggle on a daily basis to provide sexual and reproductive health services, reform laws that discriminate or violate human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, provide comprehensive sexuality education, combat violence against women, including marital rape and sexual abuse, reach out to and protect vulnerable groups and break the taboos associated with sexuality. Full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is an essential element in the global response to the pandemic.

We underline that the taboos and the politicization of issues around sexuality are major hindrances to prevention of the epidemic in our countries. The denial of the existence of youth and premarital sexuality, extra-marital sexuality, sex work and same sex practices constitutes a dangerous threat to the well-being and public health in our societies.

We are also concerned that some developed countries are failing to commit to the allocation of sufficient resources for HIV/AIDS programs and to establish measurable and time-bound Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms.

Given the imminent threat of an outbreak of the epidemic in our countries, we call upon those countries that the OIC claims to represent:

- To adopt and implement programs and policies to ensure access to affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education for all girls and boys;*
- To promote and protect sexual and reproductive rights for all;*
- To adopt measures to fully empower women and girls;*
- To recognize and support active participation of vulnerable groups such as sex workers and men having sex with men and injecting drug users in policy formulation and prevention programs;*
- To adopt Harm Reduction programs for injecting drug users, particularly in light of the growing transmission of HIV through drug use in many Muslim-majority countries.*

We urge all UN member countries to support a comprehensive, forward-looking, and ambitious political declaration, and demonstrate active leadership in bringing and combating HIV/AIDS.

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies is a solidarity network of 60 leading NGOs working on promotion of sexual, bodily and reproductive rights as human rights in the Middle East/North Africa and South/Southeast Asia.

Contact:

Dina Siddiqi Phone: 267-918-1270

Hossam Bahgat Phone: 917-945-2155

Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)

e-mail: wwhrist@superonline.com