

AIDS Action Alert

February 2016

2016 High-level meeting on HIV/AIDS: KEY THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Introduction

This ACTION ALERT aims to inform civil society organizations about how to get involved in the high level meeting on HIV/AIDS to be held during the UN General Assembly in New York in June 8-10 2016. It describes key features of the process, mechanisms for civil society involvement, the Stakeholders Taskforce and the Outcome Document. It also provides concrete guidance on key advocacy actions that that can be taken now.

The Resolution

In December 2015 the General Assembly approved a [Resolution](#) (A/RES/70/228) that sets out the process for the organization of the 2016 high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS. Please take into consideration the following decisions contained in the Resolution when planning your advocacy actions:

- The high-level meeting will take place 8 -10 of June 2016, and will comprise of plenary meetings and up to five thematic panel discussions.
- Civil society is encouraged to participate through an accreditation process (already closed) or in government delegations.
- The Civil society hearing is to take place on April 6th 2016.
- Member states will negotiate an outcome document to be approved at the high-level meeting in June

The High Level Meeting

- The high-level meeting “will undertake a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declarations on HIV/AIDS of 2006 and 2011 including successes, best practices, lessons learned, obstacles and gaps, challenges and opportunities”.
- The high-level meeting will comprise **plenary meetings** and up to five **thematic panel** discussions. The **opening plenary** meeting will feature statements by the President of the General Assembly, the

UN Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, a person openly living with HIV and an eminent person actively engaged in the response to HIV/AIDS.

Civil Society Involvement

- **Non-governmental organizations** and civil society organizations were invited to apply for accreditation to attend the meeting (deadline was February 15, 2016)
- In the HLM resolution on modalities, Member States are **encouraged to include in their national delegations** representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and organizations and networks representing people living with HIV, women, adolescents and young persons, orphans, migrants, community organizations, faith-based organizations and the private sector. For civil society organizations, increasing the participation of key populations¹ will be strategic.

The Civil Society Hearing

The President of the General Assembly will organize, on 6th April 2016, an **informal interactive civil society hearing** with the active participation of people living with HIV and broader civil society, and attended by representatives of Member States, the Observer State and observers, as part of the preparatory process for the high-level meeting. The President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary of the hearing, issued as a document of the Assembly prior to the high-level meeting.

It is important that civil society organizations invite their governments' Missions to this session.

The Outcome Document

The President of the General Assembly will hold timely, open, transparent and inclusive consultations with all Member States, giving due consideration to the report of the Secretary-General and other inputs to the preparatory process for the high-level meeting, with a view to **adopting a concise and action-oriented declaration** as an outcome of the high-level meeting, to be agreed upon by Member States, towards achieving the commitment of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

For civil society organizations, it is an opportunity to have governments reporting on trends and measuring results and approve language towards strengthening the capacity of countries to respond to HIV in an

¹ The term 'key population' refers to groups of people who are key to the dynamics of, and the responses to, HIV and AIDS. These populations include: people living with HIV, women and girls, youth, sex workers, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, transgenders and orphans and vulnerable children.

articulated manner, advancing multi-sectorial action, strengthening community systems and addressing the current gaps on the AIDS responses, including the funding gap.

The Stakeholders Taskforce

The President of the General Assembly in partnership with UNAIDS has established a Stakeholders Task Force (STF) comprised of representatives from civil society. The Task Force will report to the Office of the President of General Assembly and provide advice on key decisions relating to attendance and participation of civil society organizations in the high-level meeting, including helping to identify participants for the civil society hearing and deciding on the format, themes, speakers, and program of the panel discussions.

After an open call for nominations, the Office of the President of the General Assembly selected 12 individuals from all around the world representing key constituencies. The members of the Stakeholders Task Force are:

- Annah Sango, Zimbabwe
- Anton Basenko, Ukraine
- Pye Jakobsson, Sweden
- Abhina Aher, India
- Javier Hourcade Bellocq, Argentina
- Trevor Stratton, Canada
- Rita Wahab, Lebanon
- Kieran Daly, USA
- Jaevion Nelson, Jamaica
- Gershon Kapalaula, Zambia
- Joan Peters, Antigua
- Marama Pala - New Zealand

UNAIDS and ICASO will serve as the Stakeholders Task Force Secretariat.

KEY ADVOCACY ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE NOW & GET INVOLVED IN THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING

The HLM will happen in a context where the United Nations is discussing how to align its work with the 2030 Agenda. It is important to use this opportunity to connect HIV to the sustainable development agenda.

1. **Influence** your UN Mission's input. Between now and the high level meeting, UN Missions in New York will negotiate an outcome document to be presented and approved at the meeting in June. You can talk directly to your [UN Mission](#), but sometimes is better to influence first your capital. It is important that you contact the Minister of Foreign Affairs in your country to establish (or strengthen) a relationship that will allow you, and your community sector colleagues, to influence the input that the Mission in New York gives during the negotiation process. You can also channel this

approach through the Health Ministry, pushing them to get involved in the HLM preparation process.

2. **Advocate** for your government to send the **highest level of official representation – Ministries, President** and that the **delegation includes representatives of civil society**, particularly from organizations of people living with HIV and key population. You can contact other organizations in your country to develop a common strategy for this advocacy effort, including identifying individuals who would best represent issues relevant for the community sector. [see Appendix 1 for a template letter].

The Resolution dealing with the organization of the 2016 high-level meeting on AIDS:

Encourages Member States to include in their national delegations to the high-level meeting representatives such as parliamentarians, mayors of cities significantly affected by HIV/AIDS, representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and organizations and networks representing people living with HIV [...]

3. **Influence** your government’s participation at the high-level meeting by influencing their **statements prior to the meeting**. It is vital that the unique perspectives and experience of the community sector are included in these preparations and deliberations.
4. **Contact accredited NGOs** directly (once the list of accredited organizations is made public by the OPGA, it will be available by emailing HLM2016@icaso.org and it will be also posted on the ICASO’s website www.icaso.org and will be widely distributed through different listservs).

If you have any questions or concerns, please email HLM2016@icaso.org. We encourage all organizations that applied for accreditation to let us know by email. This way we will know if any organization has been excluded from the final list.

Also If you would like to be added to an ‘advocates google group’ currently with more than 300 advocates from all over the world, to receive updates and exchange information, please write to HLM2016@icaso.org

Appendix 1: Sample Letter to national authority leading government involvement in the HLM

Mr./Ms./Dr.

[insert name]

[insert position]

[insert ministry/department]

Re: Civil society involvement in the national preparation for the 2016 high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS

On behalf of [insert name of organization or group] and as members of civil society, I am writing to you today to respectfully offer our support and request our involvement in the preparations toward the upcoming high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS that will take place at the United Nations in New York in June 8-10 2016.

This meeting represents an important opportunity for all stakeholders in the global AIDS response to AIDS to set bold new targets for HIV treatment, prevention, human rights and investment [add any other priority your group/population may have]. It is important that the representatives in New York that will be negotiating the outcome document in the weeks and months to come on behalf of our country have the tools and support from the different country stakeholders. We would like to offer our support for this.

Additionally, we would like to request, based on the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 23 December 2015, that [insert name of country] be represented at the highest level at the high-level meeting and that the national delegation include representatives from civil society, including non-governmental organizations and organizations and networks representing people living with HIV, women, young persons, [insert here any other group/constituency].

The important role that civil society organizations play in the response to the epidemic provides a unique and grounded perspective and access to information that would be invaluable to the delegation.

In closing, we would like to respectfully request a meeting with you and your staff to discuss our contribution and meaningful involvement in the process leading up to the HLM and in the HLM as well. Please contact me at your earliest convenience to arrange for a first meeting.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Organization/group's name and address]

[phone number and email address]