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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Second regular session of 1989
CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS:
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF
ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY
SYNDROME (AIDS)

Global Strategy for the prevention and control
of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Summary of activities and programmes being carried out
by United Nations organizations on the socio-economic
and humanitarian aspects of AIDS

INTRODUCTION

1. As pointed out in paragraph 26 of the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (A/44/274-E/1989/75, annex), a United Nations steering committee was set up by the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs to co-ordinate United Nations activities related to the prevention and control of AIDS. Accordingly, United Nations organizations are supplementing the efforts of WHO to combat AIDS by concentrating on activities under their own areas of competence that bear special relevance to AIDS (e.g. human rights, economic and social consequences of AIDS, demographic impact of AIDS etc.).

2. As recommended by the inter-agency advisory group on AIDS, which was established to facilitate the effective co-ordination of activities of the United Nations system in support of the WHO Global Strategy on AIDS, focal points within all United Nations bodies engaged in relevant activities were identified and are listed at the end of this text (see appendix). These focal points served to provide information on their organization's activities relating to AIDS, in particular, information in the following areas: (a) information campaigns, (b) research, (c) training, (d) internal policies regarding staff,

(e) institutional measures, (f) collaboration at the national level and
(g) documents and publications.

3. The present report serves as a supplement to the report of the Director-General of WHO on the Global Strategy for the prevention and control of AIDS. It is a summary of AIDS-related activities being carried out by the organizations of the United Nations system. Information on the following organizations' activities is outlined in the Director-General's report (A/44/274-E/1989/75) and therefore does not need to be repeated here: United Nations Development Programme (paras. 29-30), and United Nations Population Fund (paras. 35-37).

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Institutional measures

4. Following the designation of the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs as focal point at United Nations Headquarters for activities related to the prevention and control of AIDS, the Department has taken steps to incorporate AIDS in all relevant aspects of its work programme. As mentioned in paragraph 26 of the report of the Director-General, the Under-Secretary-General has established a steering committee consisting of the heads of all concerned United Nations programmes and departments. A standing committee of focal points and liaison offices acts as a working group of the steering committee. Two task forces have also been established: a Population Division task force to study the demographic implications of the pandemic; and a departmental task force, which assists the Under-Secretary-General in the co-ordination of activities of the Department and programme implementation in the area of AIDS prevention and control.

Research

5. In conjunction with other United Nations organizations and with experts from the academic and corporate communities, the Department is studying the feasibility of undertaking a case study to project and assess the probable socio-economic effects of HIV/AIDS on specific industrial, agricultural or service sectors of a given country. A preliminary proposal will be presented for consideration by the inter-agency advisory group on AIDS at its next meeting in September 1989.

Documents and publications

6. The Population Division has produced a report for the Population Commission entitled "Modelling the spread of the AIDS epidemic and its demographic impact" (E/CN.9/1989/PPP.2/Rev.1). The report reviews the characteristics of the AIDS epidemic and of the transmission of HIV infection that are necessary for model construction, and the types of models that have been proposed to measure the magnitude of the demographic impact of the disease in the short- and medium-term. It also highlights some preliminary results that are consistent among all modelling approaches.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

Information campaigns

7. In co-operation with non-governmental organizations and WHO, the Department organized a one-day seminar on the human rights aspects of AIDS on World AIDS Day, 1 December 1988. An AIDS quilt exhibit displayed in the Public Lobby of the Secretariat received much attention from the media. Similar events are being planned for 1989, 1990 and 1991 on World AIDS Day at United Nations Headquarters and information centres.

8. In 1988 a number of 10-, 12- and 30-second television spots on AIDS were taped with celebrities who took part in the benefit performance of Hair in the General Assembly Hall. AIDS was the topic of several programmes that were aired both on United Nations television and radio in 1988. The programmes included interviews with the Director-General of WHO and the Director of the Global Programme on AIDS. The Department has also collaborated with National Public Television to produce a series of programmes on this subject.

9. A radio programme on AIDS was produced by broadcasters and journalists from developing countries in co-operation with the New York University School of Journalism and Mass Communications. It included interviews with the Health Educator at New York University Health Services, the Medical Director of St. Clare's Hospital in New York City and homeless AIDS patients.

DEPARTMENT OF TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

10. The Department currently has no special programmes on the prevention and control of AIDS, but co-operates closely with other organizations of the United Nations system. It has also identified several areas in its technical co-operation programmes for future activities in developing countries.

Information campaigns

11. Within its development planning, administration and population projects in various countries, the Department can devise channels of communication in specific community settings to reach target groups and disseminate appropriate knowledge about the control and prevention of AIDS.

Training

12. In population and developing planning projects, it will undertake the task of providing education and information on measures of control and prevention of AIDS by holding training programmes and seminars on this subject and conducting special studies at the national level to better understand the particular situation in each country.

Research

13. Through technical co-operation projects in population studies, the Department will assist countries in assessing the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of AIDS on fertility, mortality (including child mortality), migration and population distribution, with respect to its consequences on social and economic development. In particular, within its integrated rural development programme, the Department can develop methodologies to collect empirical data, conduct an analysis on the incidence of AIDS and create a greater awareness of the disease and its prevention at the community level.

Collaborative efforts at the national level

14. The Department will assist developing countries to obtain base-line data on AIDS for future analysis through the addition of questions on AIDS in the questionnaire for the 1990 round of the World Population and Housing Censuses. The analysis of such data will provide information for formulation of policies and action programmes towards the prevention and control of AIDS.

MEDICAL SERVICE, HEADQUARTERS

Internal policies on AIDS

15. It was stressed once again at the meeting of the Medical Directors, held at Bangkok from 5 to 9 March 1989, that United Nations staff members would not have to undergo compulsory testing for the HIV virus.

16. Staff members suffering from AIDS or who tested positive for the virus are fully protected in regard to their job and would be treated as any other staff member with a severe illness. Disability benefits would be provided if the need should arise.

17. Every staff member going on mission to Africa would be provided with a 5 cc syringe and two 22 g needles, should any emergency injection be required.

18. A recent survey was conducted that showed that in most duty stations routine blood screening for the HIV virus was being carried out at local hospitals. Except for six African countries, condoms, disposable syringes and needles were available. Educational sessions have been started in most duty stations on the dangers of the disease and measures for prevention. No similar programme is underway at Headquarters since the media have provided ample information about this subject.

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

19. The Centre for Human Rights is actively engaged in preparations with the WHO Global Programme on AIDS in the joint organization of a consultation on AIDS and human rights, to be held at Geneva in late June 1989. Co-operation between the

United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the WHO Global Programme on AIDS began in 1988 when World Health Assembly resolution WHA 41.24 on the avoidance of discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS was being considered by the Assembly. The consultations will be part of an effort to set out a common line of thinking for action in the area of discrimination concerning affected individuals, taking into account international human rights law and public health considerations.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT VIENNA

Institutional measures

20. The United Nations Office at Vienna has designated an AIDS focal point and established a working group on AIDS to facilitate the co-ordination of activities and identification of appropriate ways and means of incorporating a component on the prevention and control of AIDS into its substantive social and drug abuse control programmes.

21. In view of the close links between drug abuse and the spread of AIDS, all of the drug control activities indirectly support the struggle against AIDS. This is reflected in the effort of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control and the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, which was held at Vienna from 25 November to 20 December 1988 and adopted the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The International Narcotics Control Board, which addressed the problem of AIDS and intravenous drug abuse in its report for 1987, devoted considerable attention to this problem at its 1988 meetings. Up-dated information on the matter is provided in its 1988 report.

22. The programmes of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, particularly those dealing with the advancement of women, youth, social policy and social welfare, treatment of offenders and disability, are working to ensure an appropriate contribution to the Global Strategy on AIDS from the social sector. These programmes, using their expertise and established channels of communication, are designing or implementing specific projects within their fields of work. For example, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch, in co-operation with the WHO Global Programme on AIDS, is implementing a project on AIDS in prisons and is designing a project on the treatment of drug addicted persons in correctional institutions.

23. The Division for the Advancement of Women, also supported by the WHO Global Programme, is currently implementing a project to promote the acquisition by women of knowledge and skills necessary for AIDS prevention and control.

24. In co-operation with other organizations at the Vienna International Centre, the community of non-governmental organizations and the host country, the United Nations Office at Vienna implemented a programme to mark the observance of World AIDS Day. It included an audio-visual programme and a panel discussion on the social and drug abuse aspects of AIDS.

Documents and publications

25. The Division for the Advancement of Women is preparing a special issue on Women and AIDS in its recurrent publication, Women 2000.

26. In the field of prevention activities, the Division of Narcotic Drugs published three articles on AIDS and drug abuse in the quarterly Bulletin on Narcotics. The first article presented the results of research on the subject; the second summarized research evidence and points of view of a large group of scientists on drug policies in the context of AIDS prevention; and the third article addressed AIDS prevention through treatment of intravenous drug users.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

27. AIDS-related matters are presently being dealt with as a component of drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation programme element in the social development programme of the Commission. In addition, the Commission has programmed in the biennium 1990-1991 a report on issues related to the prevention of AIDS for presentation to the Committee on Population and Social Development at its second session to be held in 1990.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Information campaigns

28. In December 1988, AIDS Day was organized at ECLAC to highlight the problem the pandemic poses and to provide a forum for the exchange of information. A taped message of the Secretary-General's address on AIDS was aired, which was followed by lectures on the problem. A panel of counsellors was set up to advise youths on preventive measures concerning AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Similar meetings have been planned for 1989 and 1990.

Training

29. A medical bulletin on AIDS has been issued to all staff members and their families on the clinical and epidemiological aspects and on measures for prevention and treatment of the disease.

Collaboration at the national level

30. The Commission will maintain contact with the national health authorities in order to provide information and advice on matters relating to AIDS.

UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT)

Information campaigns

31. In collaboration with the Kenya Ministry of Health and the Red Cross, Habitat has carried out extensive activities in that country to promote awareness of the disease. The public has been alerted to the dangers of HIV/AIDS through the media (television, radio and newspapers), and plays, songs and contests for posters have also been utilized as a means for promoting this goal.

Internal policies regarding staff

32. Habitat co-operates closely with the Joint Medical Service of the United Nations Office at Nairobi in creating awareness on the prevention and dissemination of AIDS. In this connection, an information circular on AIDS was distributed to all staff and various posters and reading materials were prepared for their use. In addition, the Medical Service has made condoms available to all staff members free of charge.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

Information campaigns

33. UNICEF has focused its AIDS-related efforts on such areas as information, education and communication, training and the socio-economic impact on women and children. It has effectively utilized its existing network of social mobilization channels, including schools, churches, women's groups etc., which are already actively delivering a variety of child survival messages.

34. The majority of UNICEF-supported AIDS efforts have concentrated on the development of materials (posters, pamphlets, videos, radio spots etc.) or on funding the inclusion of AIDS prevention as a subject in existing training for different levels of health workers.

35. Some examples of UNICEF work in this area include funding and offering technical assistance for the preparation of cartoon magazines on AIDS for young adults, AIDS manuals for health workers and UNICEF-sponsored long-term studies on mother-to-child transmission of AIDS.

Training

36. One of the important decisions reached by the Executive Board of UNICEF, which met in April 1988 to plan the Fund's first policy and programme direction regarding AIDS prevention, was to train UNICEF staff in the fundamental patterns of the disease, particularly as it affects women and children, and in effective programming.

37. UNICEF has provided technical assistance to six field offices in Africa that have launched AIDS-related projects, and it has held training courses on AIDS-prevention measures at Nairobi and Abidjan for all UNICEF health and expanded programme on immunization officers in East and West Africa and has issued programme guidelines for its work in the AIDS field.

Collaborative efforts at the national level

38. The Executive Board also decided to strengthen its collaboration with national Governments to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS in the context of national programmes.

39. An example of this close collaboration is a proposed \$300,000 programme of co-operation with the Government of the Congo for the period 1989-1992, which will assist in implementing selected information, education and communication components of the national AIDS plan. Activities will cover the training of health workers, including physicians and paramedics, and AIDS programmes for schools and universities, businesses, religious groups, journalists etc.

Documents and publications

40. UNICEF has produced a progress report on its AIDS-related activities in 1988 (E/ICEF/1989/L.7). This report outlines UNICEF headquarters and field activities, its collaboration with WHO, projects for supplementary funding, which will be submitted to the 1989 meeting of the Executive Board, and planned future activities.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

41. Since WFP is an operational organization it is not directly engaged in the relevant activities on AIDS. However, it has a large portfolio of projects such as institutional feeding (including health facilities), vulnerable group feeding (aimed at destitute populations), and others in which AIDS victims could become beneficiaries if a Government so requests.

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

42. Policy and guidelines of UNHCR regarding AIDS stipulate that refugees would not be singled out for special attention in relation to AIDS, but that they would be considered in the same manner as all other residents and citizens. UNHCR agrees with the opinion of WHO that there is no justification for screening refugees because of their status as "travellers", as this would not prevent the introduction or spread of AIDS. Instead, ways should be sought to target assistance programmes better in order to afford them preventive and supportive facilities commensurate to those available to nationals.

Information campaigns

43. UNHCR will advocate the policy outlined above in national programmes and legislation dealing with AIDS insofar as it applies to refugees. It will work

closely with relevant bodies to promote public information concerning the modes of transmission and their prevention. It will also work closely with WHO and health ministries for the provision of culturally appropriate education materials.

Training

44. UNHCR will supervise and train health and counselling staff on specific preventive issues, such as handling of body fluids and tissues, risk from sharp items such as needles etc.

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Information campaigns

45. As UNRWA has not developed its own programme on AIDS, it tackles this matter in collaboration with WHO. It follows up WHO activities in epidemiological surveillance, research and preventive measures. This is maintained through the wide dissemination of information received from WHO on a regular basis to all concerned health personnel in headquarters and field offices.

46. UNRWA maintains close contact with the public health authorities of host Governments for exchange of information on the disease. In collaboration with WHO, it has launched health education campaigns that have been aimed at target refugee populations.

Institutional measures

47. UNRWA is in the process of developing a special programme on AIDS with the assistance of WHO. A meeting of senior health staff and senior WHO officials is scheduled for late May 1989 for this purpose.

INTER-AGENCY ACTIVITIES ON AIDS

48. The inter-agency advisory group on AIDS was established in April 1988 in response to General Assembly resolution 42/8, in which the Assembly requested a co-ordinated response by the United Nations system to the AIDS pandemic. The advisory group has established a working group on the socio-economic implications of AIDS. This working group is made up of relevant United Nations organizations and its purpose is to examine how the United Nations system could contribute to a better understanding of the socio-economic and humanitarian implications of the AIDS pandemic. At its first meeting, held at Geneva on 1 and 2 February 1989, several broad socio-economic areas of concern were identified for which the HIV/AIDS epidemic was likely to have an impact. Further research, expansion of data bases and the exchange of substantive information will be co-ordinated through the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, which has agreed to act as a central exchange point.

APPENDIX

United Nations organizations with focal points on
AIDS-related activities

Department of International Economic
and Social Affairs

Office of the Director-General for
Development and International
Economic Co-operation

Department of Technical Co-operation
for Development

Department of Administration and
Management

Department of Public Information

World Food Programme

Centre for Science and Technology for
Development

United Nations Office at Vienna

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Conference on Trade
and Development

United Nations Development
Programme

United Nations Population Fund

United Nations Centre for Human
Settlements (Habitat)

International Trade Centre

Centre for Human Rights of the
United Nations Office at Geneva

Regional Commissions Liaison Office,
New York

United Nations Institute for Training
and Research

United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

United Nations University

Economic Commission for Africa

Economic Commission for Europe

Economic Commission for Latin America
and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Asia
and the Pacific

Economic and Social Commission for
Western Asia

Office of the United Nations Disaster
Relief Co-ordinator

International Court of Justice

United Nations Institute for Disarmament
Research

United Nations Social Defence Research
Institute

Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Medical Service,
Headquarters