

**Joint Statement of the
Members of the Partnership Forum on HIV/AIDS
At the Round Table Consultation on NDP II
Swakopmund, 17-19 February 2003**

Honourable Gerhard Totemeyer, Deputy Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing
Honoured Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other Representatives of Partner Ministries and Agencies
Development Partner Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen:

This joint statement by the Development Partner members of the Partnership Forum on HIV/AIDS has been prepared in the spirit of strong collaboration and close partnership shared with the Government of the Republic of Namibia. The Partnership Forum is convened by the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, consisting of members from the Embassies and Agencies represented in Namibia who are supporting or wish to support HIV/AIDS activities in the country. The main purpose of the group is to share information and find ways to work together to help accelerate Namibia's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In our deliberations, we are heartened by the progressive perspectives of the Government and the increasing levels of attention being given to HIV/AIDS. The fact that His Excellency, President Sam Nujoma, gave high prominence to the actions being taken on HIV/AIDS by his Government, including budgetary provisions, in his speech at the New Year's Greeting ceremony gives clear indication that the pandemic is of the highest priority to the Government. The fact also, that a cluster on HIV/AIDS has been given focus in this important consultation is also noteworthy.

We applaud the increasingly active role of the Ministry of Health and Social Services to foster a multi-sectoral response and to mobilize resources. In this connection, may we take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry on obtaining the funding approval of the Global Fund on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis? Congratulations extend also to all the partners involved in preparing the high quality proposal. The efforts of several key Ministries in preparing and implementing sector plans on HIV/AIDS are also commendable. These include, among others, efforts by:

- The Ministry of Health and Social Services in ensuring availability of condoms, effective treatment of opportunistic infections and the initiation of the programmes for Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission in two hospitals and making reproductive health services accessible to adolescents.
- The two Ministries of Basic and Higher Education on HIV prevention among youth and adolescents and looking into ensuring continued access to education by orphans and other vulnerable children.
- The Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare in spear heading the plight of orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.
- The Ministries of Defense and Home Affairs in their programme for HIV prevention among the armed forces and police.
- The more recent initiatives of the farming sectors through the Ministry of Labour.
- The efforts in some regions spearheaded by the Regional Governors to support community-based organizations, especially the organization for People Living with HIV and AIDS, Lironga Eparu, are beginning to make in-roads in combating stigma and discrimination.

These efforts are only examples of the range of efforts being introduced by the various arms of Government, not to mention those of the Private Sector and Non-governmental organizations.

The results of the 2002 Sero Surveillance Survey on HIV prevalence rates among pregnant women announced in Parliament in November bring forth mixed reactions. Some regions are clearly becoming overburdened with the impact and will need special focus and support. On the other hand, the positive

reduction trends in some regions and among the younger age groups are welcome signs that some interventions are working and beginning to turn the tide.

Despite these good efforts, challenges remain. The full recognition that HIV/AIDS is a “development problem” and not a public health concern is still not pervasive in the country. Some overriding concerns, especially in direct relation to the National Development Plan are:

- While the NDP II has a special chapter on HIV/AIDS and has given emphasis to combating HIV/AIDS as a “national development objective”, attention has not been adequate in each of the sector chapters to ensure the level of accelerated action needed to stem and mitigate the massive impacts being felt or anticipated to be felt across the economic and social sectors. Further sectoral programming is clearly needed, with more detailed planning and budgeting, possibly in the form of “sectoral strategic plans on HIV/AIDS”. We can use this opportunity to discuss ways on how we can work together to put more depth of action in the NDP II process. This would require follow through by the NPC and the Ministry of Finance to incorporate these plans into the annual GRN budgeting and development planning cycle to safeguard GRN resourcing. Without this depth of endorsement by the National Development Plan, the level of effort would surely not be of the order needed given the scale of infection, death and deterioration of the economy and society itself, caused by HIV and AIDS.
- The need to put real meaning and action into the term “partnership” is clearly recognized. The Government is in the driver’s seat and will need to spear head these “Smart Partnerships” (to borrow His Excellency the President’s term). If the process of preparing sectoral strategic plans can involve the public, NGOs and the private sector, then the underlying challenge of the limited and deteriorating situation of human resources can be minimized and the comparative advantage of the various partners can be harnessed. Support to NGOs by the Government would provide more sustainability in the NGO community’s valuable efforts, especially in the increasingly critical area of “care”.
- Smart Partnerships combined with decentralization of line Ministry functions to the regions would certainly make the national efforts begin to pay off with interventions managed as close to the community level as possible. Decentralization, with devolution of authority and resources, is possibly the most strategic and important step in turning the tide of the pandemic, since the actual capacity to bring together the multi-sectoral response lies in the hands of regional and local governments.
- A coherent and strategic framework is clearly needed to marshal action across all the sectors. Such a framework is outlined in the Medium Term Plan II on HIV/AIDS, which has just been under review. The parallel efforts of MTP II (and the subsequent MTP III) and the NDP II can hopefully come together to be the coherent and strategic framework for action in ensuring the development of the nation as well as safeguarding its future. The findings and recommendations of the very recently completed Internal and External Team Reviews merit serious and thorough consideration and follow through to move to a higher level of accelerated and coherent national response with an emphasis on capacity building throughout the system.
- The good news on Namibia’s inclusion in the 2nd round of proposal approved by the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis has heartened all of us. The much needed additional resources will indeed boost efforts. With strong collaborative action and close coordination between government, civil society and other stakeholders, the efficient planning and use of these considerable resources can be assured. Pending their arrival, the structures to ensure speedy and smooth implementation by the multiple partners will need to be put in place. However, this anticipated infusion of funds also poses a concern that these external resources should not deter or replace adequate allocation of national resources to HIV/AIDS. The limited GRN resources allocated in NDP II to this “national priority” will hopefully be reviewed and increased. Needless to say, Namibia must invest in protecting its own future from this pandemic.

We hope that this welcome event is part of an on-going process of consultation and dialogue with the Development Partners as well as Civil Society and the Private Sector to ensure the true sense of the term "Multi-sectoral response". We also hope that in this process of collaborative action, policies and programmes on HIV prevention and care can be prioritized and fully costed.

Our common aim is to overcome this massive challenge facing Namibia. Please accept our assurance that we are with you in facing it together.

Thank you.

Statement to be delivered on behalf of the Forum by:

Khin-Sandi Lwin
Convenor of the Partnership Forum on HIV/AIDS,
Chairperson of the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, and,
UNICEF Representative to Namibia.

Membership of the Partnership Forum on HIV/AIDS in Namibia

While the invitations to the Partnership Forum on HIV/AIDS is extended to the full Diplomatic Corps and Development Assistance Agencies represented in Namibia, the following have attended the meetings, most of whom are regular Members:

Botswana
European Union
Finland
France and the French Cooperation
Federal Republic of Germany and Gtz
Netherlands
Spain and the Spanish Cooperation
Sweden and SIDA
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Dfid
United States of America and USAID
Zambia

The convening group is the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS which implements the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) consisting of:

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO)
United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
World Health Organization (WHO)