

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



STATEMENT

AT THE ECOSOC MANAGEMENT SEGMENT

Agenda item 12 (g):

JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS

22 JULY 2021

Opening

- 1.1. I am honoured to present the report of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to ECOSOC in my role as the Chair of the Board this year.**

- 1.2. The report was prepared pursuant to the Council resolution 2019/33 in which the Programme Coordinating Board was requested to discuss governance issues of the Joint Programme, as well as how the Joint Programme could be sustainably core funded and report back to the Council by 2021.**

- 1.3. The ECOSOC request was timely. The Programme Coordinating Board has recently had discussions and taken decisions on several governance related issues. I am very pleased to report on these discussions and decisions to the Council.**

- 1.4. But let me start by saying that when establishing the Joint Programme in its resolutions in 1994 and 1995, the Economic and Social Council had remarkable foresight. In many ways, the Joint Programme was 20 years ahead of its time: it was, and continues to be, an innovative partnership which embodies the approaches demanded by the 2030 Agenda with its multisectoral and multi-stakeholder**

collaboration and its commitment to leaving no one behind, with most affected people at the centre of work, part of the work and part of governance. It is indeed an articulation of “We the Peoples” as it reads in the UN Charter!

2. About UNAIDS governance

2.1. Namibia is pleased to serve as the Chair of the Programme Coordinating Board this year. As established by this Council, the Board acts as the governance body for the Joint Programme. It is composed of 22 UN Members States, 11 UNAIDS co-sponsors and 5 non-governmental organizations.

2.2. The Joint Programme governance structure is unique in its level of inclusiveness as it brings Member States, co-sponsors and representatives of civil society, including people living with HIV, around the same table to discuss and agree on the policies and strategies that drive the global AIDS response forward.

2.3. The participation of the NGO delegation ensures that the deliberations and decisions of the Board are informed by the realities of those most affected by HIV.

2.4. The inclusion of co-sponsors on the Board maximizes coordination within the Joint Programme and ensures that the perspective of the many sectors engaged in the global

HIV response are brought into the Board's discussions but also that the AIDS response draws on the mandates and capacity of all of the cosponsors.

3. The PCB as the key agenda-setting forum in the global AIDS response

3.1. The Programme Coordinating Board serves as an important agenda-setting forum for the global AIDS response. The Board's reliance on consensus decision-making has enabled it to bring diverse countries and stakeholders together in a shared effort to implement effective and people-centred responses to AIDS.

3.2. The two-day Board meetings are complemented by a day-long thematic segment that fosters in-depth dialogue on key topics. The thematic segments have focused on a broad array of strategic issues, including access to medicines, HIV-related discrimination, community-led AIDS responses, HIV in emergency contexts, HIV and nutrition, HIV and tuberculosis, linkages between HIV and cervical cancer, HIV and aging, social protection in the context of HIV, sustainable financing, and priority actions for HIV prevention.

4. Monitoring the performance of the Joint Programme

4.1. A key feature of the Programme Coordination Board's functions is its regular monitoring of the Joint Programme's performance against set targets. Since the beginning of the Joint Programme, the granularity and clarity of performance reporting has improved with particular efforts made to enable the Board to link investments with specific results and impact.

4.2. Performance monitoring reports submitted to the Board provide clarity regarding the collective achievements of the Joint Programme as a whole as well as the specific contributions of individual co-sponsors.

5. Evolving governance of the Joint Programme

I will now turn to the governance issues that the PCB's report describes.

5.1. The Joint Programme governance remains aligned with the founding ECOSOC resolutions. However, governance has adapted to the evolving HIV epidemic and to the changing needs of the Joint Programme. The Board has also taken steps to strengthen the Joint Programme governance in response to independent evaluations and assessments, most recently in response to the recommendations by the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN system.

- 5.2. The changes have aimed to enhance the impact of the Board, clarify oversight and accountability of the Joint Programme, strengthen ownership by the co-sponsors and align the Joint Programme governance with the best practices in the UN system. For example, in response to the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations, the Board included an annex in its modus operandi in 2020 in order to clarify its oversight and accountability functions and to establish a new independent, external oversight advisory committee. The Board has also acted to strengthen independent evaluation and ethics reporting in relation to the work of the Joint Programme.**
- 5.3. Other recent changes include a refined division of labour amongst the Joint Programme cosponsors and secretariat, and a new model of catalytic funding for cosponsors for results-focused country level action, and a revision of the guiding principles for co-sponsorship.**
- 5.4. In the past 18 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has heavily impacted all societies across the world. It has also posed challenges to the governance of the Joint Programme. The Programme Coordinating Board has adapted its procedures to ensure continuity of governance during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to holding its meetings virtually, the Board has held a series of preparatory meetings to support careful consideration of all agenda items and ensure full**

business continuity despite the challenges of negotiations in the virtual space that we have seen across multilateral governance. As a result of its innovative and forward-thinking approach, the Board has been able to hold all its meetings as planned, including the consensus adoption of the Global AIDS Strategy in March.

6. Core funding of the Joint Programme

Let me now say a few words about the core funding of the Joint Programme as this was the other issue that the Council asked the Board to discuss.

6.1. UNAIDS relies entirely on voluntary contributions from donors and development partners. On the positive side, core funding accounts for a consistently large share of up to 80% of the Joint Programme's overall funding. This high level of core funding is a sign of the solid confidence of donors in the impact of their investments. It also reflects their confidence in the Programme Coordinating Board's oversight of the Joint Programme.

6.2. Conversely, persistent underfunding of the Joint Programme budget approved by the PCB since 2014 has made the work of the Joint Programme more challenging and has negatively impacted on its ability to lead and catalyse a robust global AIDS response. Underfunding of the Joint Programme budget has coincided with a flattening of overall investments in the global HIV response.

6.3. There is an urgent need for a renewal of global solidarity to mobilize the resources needed to achieve global AIDS targets. It will also be critical to ensure an adequate and predictable level of core and non-core funding on a multi-year basis to the Joint Programme so that it is able to continue to provide effective support to countries and continue to drive momentum of the global response. I am pleased that the draft resolution recognizes this, calls for a fully funded global AIDS response, and stresses the importance of fully funded Joint Programme budget.

7. Specific governance issues for the attention and action by the Council

Let me also draw your attention to some specific governance issues that require attention and action of the Council.

7.1. In 2019, the Joint Inspection Unit recommended that the Programme Coordinating Board engage with the Secretary-General to consider establishing a term limit for the position of the UNAIDS Executive Director in order to promote greater certainty in succession planning and a compact that would provide transparency with regard to performance expectations.

7.2. The working group of the Board which considered the JIU recommendations found that most UN entities limit the terms of office of their executive heads to no more than two terms of four to five years each. The working group also determined that the Board did not have the legal authority

to petition the Secretary General directly to establish term limits or clarify permanence expectations for the Executive Director.

7.3. Therefore, the Board recommends in its report that the Economic and Social Council request the Secretary-General to submit a report, after consultation with the Board, on the establishment of two four-year term limits, as well as performance expectations for the position of Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. I am very pleased that these discussions by the Board are recognized in the draft resolution before the Council today.

8. Closing

8.1. Before I close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Programme Coordinating Board Members for contributing to the discussions on the governance and core funding issues and to the development of the Board's report to the Council.

8.2. I would also like to thank all of you, members of the Economic and Social Council, for your continued commitment, support and guidance to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS. Together we have come a long way in fighting the AIDS epidemic in no small part thanks to the Joint Programme set up by this Council. But we still have a long way to go to reach the end of AIDS as a global health threat. I call on all of you to continue this

fight together as it is only by joining our forces that we will succeed.

8.3. It is now my distinct honour and pleasure to formally hand over the PCB Report to ECOSOC Council: