

HOPE AMIDST THE CRISIS:

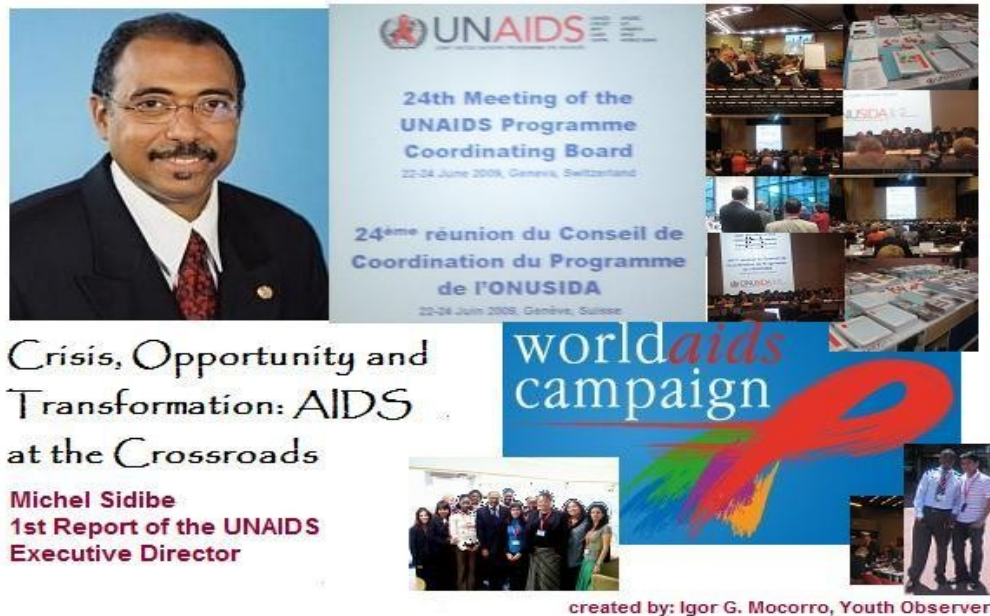
UNAIDS commitments to halt HIV & AIDS revealed at the 24th PCB Meeting

Brief Overview of the UNAIDS ED's Report

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Youth Observer/Reporter sponsored by the World AIDS Campaign

Day 2 of the 24th UNAIDS PCB Meeting; June 23, 2009; Geneva, Switzerland



"When pandora closed a box again, the only thing left inside was hope. Hope, and the conviction it inspires, is what has enabled millions of people living with HIV to keep fighting, against all odds, to change the world. It is this hope that has driven UNAIDS."

Said Michel Sidibe, as he delivered his first report as the UNAIDS Executive Director at the 2nd day of the 24th UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

In his 48-minute speech, Sidibe reaffirmed UNAIDS commitment on universal access to HIV & AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support despite the challenges and threats of economic crisis and other emerging global infectious diseases such as the AH1N1 virus. With AIDS killing 2 million people each year, he stressed the importance of evidenced-based interventions as pillars of effective HIV & AIDS response and promised changes and more efficient UNAIDS by bringing more partnerships, cooperation, diplomacy and proactive engagement at every UNAIDS country level.

In 2008, 14 billion US dollars was spent on HIV and AIDS programs. Sexual transmission remains the leading mode of HIV infection worldwide and the need to reduce sexual transmission of HIV, particularly in generalized epidemics in Africa, is of prime importance. Sidibe promised that UNAIDS will allocate funding to reach those who most at risk of HIV infection and to end the single approach to HIV prevention by focusing on the combination of preventive measures to HIV infection. This include the application of harm reduction to control the epidemic among injecting drug users (IDUs), which has been proven to be effective and can reduce billions of dollars or money spending.

While the momentum to stop AIDS is building globally, the UNAIDS Executive Director reminded everyone not to lose sight of the global picture of HIV & AIDS and that the goal to end the

epidemic is the most important. To quote Sidibe, he said *"To end the epidemic it is not not enough to provide treatment to everyone infected with HIV as this strategy will only mean struggling forever, rather the world should strive to defeat HIV decisively by supporting the Global Fund to look for cure or a vaccine or both."* He asked everyone to support the initiative to bring back into the priority agenda the goal of the discovery of HIV cure or vaccine.

Mr. Sidibe extended his salutation to the Global Network of People living with HIV (GNP+), citing the good partnership between the two organizations in forgoing a new movement for positive health, dignity, and prevention on HIV & AIDS. He recognized the strong participation and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV on AIDS response and called for every country to adopt human rights-based policies, removing punitive laws that discriminate against men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers, people who use drugs, migrants and people living with HIV. He claimed that these laws block the AIDS response and emphasized the removal of travel restriction on the basis of HIV status. Sidibe had recognized the instrumental role of Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon for South Korea to lift its travel restriction policy against people living with HIV. Likewise, he was glad to mention the reversal of Senegal's policy on the criminalization of men who have sex with men after UNAIDS intervention.

Moving forward on the agenda of HIV and AIDS, UNAIDS' new leadership aims to address gender equity, to support women and girls and young people. To ensure the efficiency of the agency, Sidibe laid out the plan to reform the UNAIDS, which include the creation of policies that address diversity of UNAIDS staff such as the recognition of same sex and domestic partnership and the UN+; cutting of operational costs of the agency to better support the other programs of the UNAIDS such as reducing travel costs and publication printing; involvement of young people at the UNAIDS through its internship training program for youth; strengthening the partnerships between UNAIDS and donors such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund. The Executive Director has cited the Asia Pacific Region as a good example of partnership between the Global Fund and UNAIDS.

While America and Europe have almost zero percent cases of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, Africa remains a challenge to UNAIDS with 300,000 babies born with HIV annually. Sibide set a target to virtually eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV by 2015 by improving maternal and child health worldwide.

The UNAIDS, as a joint programme of the United Nations' agencies, will embark on delivering as one on AIDS at the country level under Sidibe's leadership in the coming years. It will aim for the harmonization of various UN agencies' programs on HIV & AIDS and the inclusion of HIV & AIDS across the UN system.

To watch the full video of Michel Sidibe's speech, visit the UNAIDS PCB website at <http://www.unaids.org/en/default.asp#>

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