

15 June 2001

Colleagues,

There was an extraordinary meeting of the UNDG on Monday 11th June 2001 to discuss the ways in which we can collaborate at the country level to respond to the UNGASS Declaration of Commitments, the Secretary-General's initiatives on HIV/AIDS, and in particular to current plans to launch a Global Fund for HIV/AIDS and Health.

The meeting allowed us to review some of the challenges and responsibilities facing the UN System at the country level. We agreed that our central task is to support Member States to develop, strengthen and implement national strategies, especially on HIV/AIDS. Critical to success will be excellent working relationships within the UN family, including the World Bank, rooted in clarity as to what our respective strengths and roles are. In moving forward, no new global level or policy setting role is needed as UNAIDS plays this role; our job as members of UNDG is, working with UNAIDS, to provide coherent guidance and support to our colleagues in the field.

The momentum behind the creation of a Global Fund presents an opportunity to demonstrate the added value that the UN family can bring to Member States' efforts. We hope that our collective commitment to supporting the Fund will contribute to a real step up in mobilization and results in the countries we serve. Our role at the country level is to support this unprecedented international energy and effort by serving as facilitator, coalition-builder, and advocate.

Our challenge is therefore to help countries to halt the HIV/AIDS epidemic by bringing an increasingly diverse range of actors together - including governments, donors, civil society, business, and international financial institutions; to build on what works and help scale up best practice, building for example on the existing mechanism of our mandatory HIV/AIDS Theme Groups in over 110 countries and recognising that countries face very different circumstances in tackling the epidemic; and to help Member States and those who can deliver on results to access the additional resources available through the Fund.

To: Members of the United Nations Development Group
(see attached list)

Our Monday meeting resulted in a number of action points:

- 1) UNDG will update country teams on current developments, notably regarding the Fund, and clarify expectations of them;
- 2) I will pursue the suggestion that the Secretary-General write to Resident Coordinators to impress upon country teams the importance he attaches to a strong and effective UN response;
- 3) As part of the UNGASS process, UNDG will draw upon best practices and lessons learned and propose specific steps to be taken to strengthen the role of UN country teams in supporting Member States and other actors;
- 4) Immediate steps will be taken by the UNDG Programme Group, currently chaired by Mr. Kunio Waki, to prepare a Guidance Note for country level action. UNDG will review this draft Note in July.

I have asked the UNDG secretariat to follow-up on these points and to ensure that we meet again soon after UNGASS to review progress.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Malloch Brown
Chair