

## **Quick Summary report-back from the Civil Society Task Force of the 2008 High Level Meeting on AIDS**

During the days of 26 and 27 of February, 2008, the Civil Society Task Force (CSTF), met in New York for the first time. During this meeting the CSTF, set up to advise the President of the General Assembly, discussed items ranging from how we will work together, to key issues for the High Level Meeting, and space for civil society participation.

We will be providing periodic updates, informational notes and Action Alerts to keep you informed. Nonetheless, in recognition of its role and responsibility to communicate widely and in a timely manner with broader civil society, we would like to immediately share the following key issues discussed at the meeting:

**1. Terms of Reference (ToR):** the CSTF and the Office of the President of the General Assembly (OPGA), are in the process of finalizing the task force ToR. Once agreed upon, the ToR will be publicly available.

**2. Pre civil society meeting:** the CSTF plans to have a pre civil society briefing for civil society delegates to the HLM as well as an open meeting for civil society immediately prior to the HLM, on 9<sup>th</sup> June in New York City, New York. The specific time, location, theme and further details on the meeting are being developed and will be shared by the end of April. Persons who are interested in attending that meeting should make travel and accommodation preparations early.

**3. Speaker for the Opening Plenary:** the official resolution calls for a person openly living with HIV to speak at the opening plenary. The CSTF is currently developing the criteria for the selection of a recommended speaker, as well as the call for applications. The application form is expected to be publicly available by early March. The CSTF will screen and recommend a speaker, with the final decision on who the speaker will be will be to be taken by the PGA in discussion with Member States.

**4. Civil Society Hearing (CSH):** the CSH is part of the official program of the HLM and is expected to happen immediately after the opening ceremony. It is currently scheduled to last 2 hours (11 to 1), instead of 3 hours as it did in the 2006 UNGASS. Given that those 3 hours were very much needed in 2006, the CSTF has requested the facilitating Ambassadors to allocate 3 hours for this. While recognizing that this would have budgetary implications, the CSTF strongly believes that 3 hours are needed to fully allow for the presentation and discussion of key civil society issues. The CSTF is currently developing the criteria for the selection of recommended speakers for the CSH, as well as the call for applications. The application form will be publicly available in early March. Again, the final decision on who the speakers will be will be taken by the PGA in discussion with Member States.

The CTF began its discussion of a theme and topics to be discussed in this interactive meeting with Member States. We plan to further develop our thinking on a theme that emphasizes: Accountability, Inclusion and Exclusion.

**5. Panels:** there will be 5 panels at the HLM, expected to be based on the main themes of the Secretary General's Report. This report is not yet available, thus the panel themes are not defined. At this point, though, we do know that member states

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will speak on the panels and, additionally, the CSTF will recommend civil society speakers for each panel. More information on the panel themes, as well as on the selection process for recommendations for speakers on a panel will be shared as it becomes available to the CSTF.

**6. Secretary General's Report:** this Report, upon which the panel themes will likely be based, is not yet available. It is expected to be finalized by the end of March and released six weeks before the High level Meeting.

**7. Accreditation:** The CSTF is monitoring the process of registration of civil society representatives to attend the High Level Meeting. The deadline has now passed for organizations without ECOSOC status to register. If you registered on line through NGLS, you should have received an email confirming your registration, along with a user name and password that allows you to access your file. Once verified by UNAIDS, the list of those you have registered will be submitted by the PGA to Member States who have the right to "object" to any listed names if they wish, thus preventing their participation. Of course, we hope this will not happen and continue to monitor the process.

It is likely that those who have registered online will be informed of the status of their registration in April.

Registration for the HLM remains open for organizations with ECOSOC status.

**8. Travel Restrictions:** In a meeting with the Ambassadors of Botswana and Estonia, who are the Facilitators for the High Level Meeting, the CSTF registered their concern at the HLM being held in the United States where there are serious restrictions on short-term travel for people living with HIV. The CSTF proposed that the meeting be moved from NY, along the lines of similar communications from others in civil society and some governments. It appears such a move of the meeting venue is unlikely.

The CSTF intends to follow this issue carefully and continue to stress the importance of all countries removing legal barriers for people living with HIV to travel. Two members of the CSTF who are living with HIV were not able to attend the Task Force meeting because of difficulties obtaining a US visa. The Task Force will also be following up with the UN Global Task Team on HIV-related Travel Restrictions.

The CSTF will continue to work via email, conference calls and will meet again in-person in early April. Prior to the meeting, we will ensure that the meeting agenda is available.

For further communication, please send an email to: [universalaccess2010@icaso.org](mailto:universalaccess2010@icaso.org) to join the mailing list and receive up-to-date information.

***This Report-back has been prepared by the Civil Society Task Force: Kieran Daly (co-chair), Kate Thomson (co-chair), Claudia Ahumada, Elina Azaryan, Robert Carr, Syed Asif Altaf Cowdhury, Vince Crisostomo, Stijn Goossens, Linda Hartke, Laxmi Tripathi, Zonny Woods.***

***Patricia Mugambi Ndegwa, Lilian Mworeko, Rolake Odetoyinbo were unable to attend the first meeting.***