

Dr. Peter Piot  
Executive Director  
UNAIDS  
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CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

Dr. Margaret Chan  
Director General  
World Health Organization  
20, avenue Appia  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
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12<sup>th</sup> May 2008

Dear Drs. Piot and Chan:

### **Upholding the commitment to Universal Access by 2010**

As members of the Civil Society Task Force\*, set up to advise the President of the General Assembly on matters related to the upcoming High Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS, we are writing to you to express our grave concerns about the lack of emphasis on the commitment to Universal Access by the year 2010.

It has been brought to our attention that official documents being prepared for the Panels of the High Level Meeting emphasize benchmarks other than 2010 (e.g. MDG targets of 2015), failing to prioritize the commitment to Universal Access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. We recognize that Universal Access is integrally linked to issues of broader development, as contained within the MDGs. However, these must not detract from nor substitute for the urgent need to deliver on the commitments to Universal Access by 2010.

In fact, a focus on processes and benchmarks beyond 2010 undermines the momentum generated in the emergency response to HIV and AIDS. This response continues to have positive impacts in highlighting and accelerating related social and economic development issues. These include the empowerment of women and girls, protecting human rights of vulnerable and marginalized populations, including people living with HIV, strengthening health systems, building national capacity, and establishing mechanisms for procurement, distribution and delivery of drugs and diagnostics.

In light of this, we are writing to you with a sense of urgency. We ask for your leadership in ensuring that the High Level Meeting, and the related briefing papers developed by your agencies, reiterates and strengthens the commitment to achieving Universal Access by 2010. The High Level Meeting should look at progress, but also at challenges, gaps and, importantly, what actions must be taken to overcome these to be able to fulfill the commitment to universal access by 2010. It is critically important that this position is clearly documented and communicated as an outcome of the meeting. Millions of lives depend on this commitment, which cannot be delayed. A failure to fulfill international commitments has human and social costs which are unacceptable.

Due to the urgency of this matter and the soon approaching High Level Meeting, we ask that you respond by 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 2008..

Sincerely,

**Civil Society Task Force**

\*Kieran Daly (co-chair), Claudia Ahumada, Elina Azaryan, Robert Carr, Syed Asif Altaf Cowdhury, Vince Crisostomo, Stijn Goossens, Linda Hartke, Neeraj Mistry, Lilian Mworeko, Rolake Odetoyinbo, Laxmi Tripathi, Zonny Woods