UPDATE ON THE UNGASS DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS

UNITED NATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS JUNE 2001

JULY 2002 PREPARED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS (ICASO)
Acknowledgements

ICASO wishes to thank Rob Camp, Robinson Cabello Chávez, Michaela Figuera, Carlos García de Léon, John Godwin, Renate Koch and Merle Mendonca for their contribution to the article on NGO use of the declaration; Bai Bagasao, for information on UNAIDS activities; Bill Whitaker, for information on the Special Envoy proposal; and Kathleen Cravero, Susan Chong, Nicky Davies, Le Ann Dolan, Tanya Jewell, Mick Matthews, Shaun Mellors, Michael O’Connor, Mary Partlow and David Patterson, for reviewing an outline of this Update and for providing suggestions on the contents.

This publication is made possible through the financial assistance of the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Ford Foundation, and Health Canada, International Affairs Directorate.

Copies of this document are available in English, French and Spanish on the ICASO website at www.icaso.org

Readers should also consult the Advocacy Guide to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, prepared in October 2001 and also available on the ICASO website.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>NGOs Find Innovative Ways to Use the Declaration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>How the ICASO Networks Are Working to Promote the Declaration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Activities to Promote the Declaration Have Been Integrated Throughout the UN System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Strategies for NGOs to Follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Special Envoy Idea Receives Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Plans for Monitoring and Evaluating the Implementation of the Declaration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One year has elapsed since the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was unanimously adopted by member states at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS in New York. The Declaration of Commitment will serve as a road map for the global response to HIV/AIDS over the next decade. How has the Declaration been promoted? What progress has been made on implementing the goals and targets contained in the Declaration?

This Update contains information on how the Declaration has been promoted by NGOs at the local and national level; by the central and regional secretariats of ICASO; and by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). A proposal to appoint regional UN Special Envoys to promote the Declaration is described. A progress report is provided on the development of indicators to assist in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Declaration. Finally, the Update recommends strategies that NGOs can follow to promote the Declaration in the coming months.

This update is a companion piece to the Advocacy Guide to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, published by ICASO in October 2001.

**RESOURCES**

Consult the website of the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) at <www.unaids.org> for the text of the Declaration of Commitment in English, French, Spanish and Russian. Look under “UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS.” Other UNAIDS materials related to the Declaration will be posted on this site as they become available.

NGOs Find Innovative Ways to Use the Declaration

The Declaration of Commitment is a useful tool for enhancing the response to HIV/AIDS. The *Advocacy Guide to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*, which ICASO published in October 2001, provided NGOs with suggested strategies for promoting the Declaration. In this article, ICASO is pleased to be able to provide examples from around the world of how NGOs are actually using the Declaration.

NGOs have been using the Declaration of Commitment to strengthen their existing advocacy efforts:

The Declaration of Commitment is a very useful tool for doing advocacy work. It can be used to remind governments that they have made specific commitments. It can be used as a benchmark for assessing what governments have done. And it can be used to reinforce positions being advanced by NGOs. Here are some examples of how the Declaration is being used:

- **Via Libre Peru** has added the Declaration to its background documentation for its advocacy campaigns for better HIV prevention, medical care and access to treatment.

- In lobbying for a national plan of action against HIV/AIDS in Peru, **Via Libre Peru** has cited the paragraphs in the Declaration that call for appropriate prevention and education efforts, medical care and access to treatments.

- The **National AIDS Trust (NAT)** used the Declaration to critique a draft strategy on sexual health and HIV produced for England. NAT published a written response to the draft document in which it assessed the strategy against three components of the Declaration – the importance of strong national leadership and co-ordination; the need to embed a multi-sectoral response; and the centrality of human rights to national responses. The Declaration provided a useful benchmark against which to assess the draft strategy and to make recommendations for how to strengthen it – particularly because the strategy was very focused on health services, had failed to expressly adopt a human rights framework, and had failed to incorporate all of the various social aspects of the epidemic (e.g., education, asylum, prisons, welfare, criminal justice).
• The AIDS Law Unit (Legal Assistance Centre) has used the Declaration to argue with government officials for access to treatment in Namibia. The Unit also uses the Declaration in its information and strategy meetings on this topic with other AIDS service organizations and people living with HIV/AIDS.

• The AIDS Law Unit (Legal Assistance Centre) has used the Declaration during training sessions with government officials to advocate for appropriate HIV/AIDS workplace policies and for the need for a rights-based approach to the epidemic.

• MEXSIDA, a coalition of HIV/AIDS NGOs in Mexico, has proposed to the Government of Mexico that it provide funding for a special office to be established within MEXSIDA. The office would monitor the actions of the National AIDS Program in implementing the commitments contained in the Declaration, and would also promote the Declaration throughout Mexico. The government has accepted the concept and is looking for funding.

• MEXSIDA is encouraging the Government of Mexico to propose to the Organización de Estados Americanos (the Organization of American States) that it organize a special session on the Declaration of Commitment.

• The Guyana Human Rights Association used the Declaration to advocate for the development of HIV/AIDS policies in the workplace at two workshops involving members of the Joint Services (Army, Police, Prisons, Fire) and police officers.

• The European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) has used the Declaration in its discussions with European parliamentarians to advocate for the establishment of a European clinical trials system, for more funding for NGOs, and for the inclusion of the words “HIV” and “AIDS” in European Union health policy documents.

• The European AIDS Treatment Group has also used the Declaration in media conferences to back-up its advocacy positions. It found that the Declaration was a very useful tool at a recent pre-Barcelona media briefing on trade, patents and intellectual property issues.

• Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA (ACCSI) compiled a list of the commitments in the Declaration and sent this to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Venezuela along with a letter asking the MoH to develop a workplan to implement the commitments. ACCSI offered to assist the Minister of Health to design strategies to meet the targets contained in the Declaration. As a result, the MoH invited the NGO sector to submit projects that would complement the existing national strategic plan on HIV/AIDS and enable Venezuela to meet at least some of the commitments.

• NGOs throughout Latin America are using the Declaration to support their demands for better access to treatments for people living with HIV/AIDS, by reminding governments of the commitments they made in the Declaration and by including copies of the Declaration in their background materials.
NGOs have been promoting the Declaration of Commitment by distributing copies and by disseminating information about the Declaration:

It is important to ensure that the text of the Declaration of Commitment and information about the Declaration is disseminated widely to government officials, NGOs working on HIV/AIDS, organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS, researchers, the media and other stakeholders. This is the best way to draw attention to the commitments that all national governments have made in the Declaration, and to make sure that as many people and organizations as possible can use the Declaration as a tool to bring about change. Here are some examples of how NGOs have gone about this task:

- The Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA) distributed copies of the Declaration to a group of teachers from the different regions of Guyana who are currently re-writing curriculum guides for the nursery, primary and secondary school levels. Working with the Curriculum Unit of the Ministry of Health and with Amnesty International-Guyana, GHRA explained to the teachers how the principles of the Declaration can be integrated into the family, human sexuality and human rights topic areas of the new curriculum guides.

- In the United Kingdom, the Declaration was distributed at policy forums convened by the National AIDS Trust (NAT). These forums bring together NGOs and government officials from the regions of the UK. Discussion of the Declaration was included on the agendas of these forums. Participants in the forums were asked to provide information about the Declaration to their constituencies. NAT also publicised the Declaration through its Policy Bulletin Impact.

- Via Libre Peru sent information explaining the importance and the goals of the Declaration to other NGOs, health professionals, Members of Congress, and community leaders.

NGOs have also been using the Declaration of Commitment in other ways:

For example:

- Because the Declaration provides a road map of what needs to be done to address HIV/AIDS, many NGOs find that it is a useful document for planning their own programmes.

- NGOs in Venezuela are using the human rights provisions in the Declaration to support their request for funding for a project that will address human rights issues.

- NGOs are making links between the Declaration of Commitment and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Some of the proposals submitted to the Global Fund are for the purpose of implementing the commitments made in the Declaration.

- NGOs are using statements made in the Declaration to reinforce the need for civil society to be a full partner in the response to HIV/AIDS.
How the ICASO Networks Are Working to Promote the Declaration

Since the Declaration of Commitment was adopted in June 2001, the ICASO central and regional secretariats have been actively promoting it, both within ICASO and at regional HIV/AIDS conferences and events. In October 2001, ICASO produced an Advocacy Guide to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, available on the ICASO website at www.icaso.org under “UNGASS.” ICASO has also been collecting the names of NGOs that have endorsed the Declaration; the list of NGOs is available (also on the ICASO website at www.icaso.org under “UNGASS.”)

ICASO is planning to unveil two new UNGASS-related initiatives in the coming months:

1. The Pilot Country Monitoring Program.
   In 2003, states will have to report on their progress in fulfilling the commitments contained in the Declaration of Commitment. A small number of countries will be selected to participate in ICASO’s Pilot Country Monitoring Program. The exact details of the program have still be to worked out. The program will likely include one or more of the following elements:
   (a) monitoring how the national government evaluates the implementation of the commitments in the Declaration; (b) designing and conducting a separate NGO evaluation of the activities undertaken by the national government to implement the Declaration; and (c) preparing an NGO response to the annual progress reports which the national government files with UNAIDS (for inclusion in the UN Secretary-General’s annual report to the General Assembly). The purpose of the Pilot Country Monitoring Program is to hold governments accountable for following through on their commitments in the Declaration.

Call for Feedback on NGO Experiences

We learn from each other. ICASO would like to receive feedback on your experiences in using the Declaration of Commitment. We will make sure that the information we receive is compiled and fed back to NGOs around the world. See the Acknowledgements page for ICASO contact information.
Regional initiatives are also being developed. For example, the Latin American and Caribbean Council of AIDS Service Organizations (LACCASO) has prepared a list of commitments contained in the Declaration that are due before 2005, and a model letter to the Ministry of Health about the importance of implementing these commitments, and has circulated both documents to NGOs in the region for use as an advocacy tool. As well, the Asia/Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO) is developing a module for capacity building workshops to assist NGOs in using the Declaration to advocate with governments to implement the commitments contained in the Declaration. ICASO Regional Secretariats will also be issuing periodic guidance notes to NGOs to highlight specific regional interests and issues.

ICASO will continue to develop its action plans on the Declaration based on four principles:

- Reinforcing rights-based approaches;
- Keeping the world accountable;
- Using the Declaration to push forward sensitive issues; and
- Consolidating gains made by PWAs.

2 UNGASS Country Working Groups (UCWGs). ICASO and its networks are advocating the formation of UNGASS Country Working Groups (UCWGs) as one way of promoting implementation of the Declaration of Commitment within countries. UCWGs would be comprised of key stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS, including the national government, NGOs, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and the private sector. Whatever stage a country is at in the development in its response to HIV/AIDS, UCWGs would provide an opportunity for key players to come together to examine how they have responded to the Declaration and where more attention needs to be focused. In countries where a working relationship does not exist between the national government and NGOs, NGOs will be encouraged to form their own UCWG to review the response in their country. Some of the things the UCWG could review include: (a) strategies undertaken by the national government to incorporate the Declaration into the National AIDS Programme; (b) the steps taken by the national government to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Declaration; and (c) the annual progress report on implementation of the Declaration prepared by the national government for submission to the UN Secretary-General.
Activities to Promote the Declaration Have Been Integrated Throughout the UN System

The United Nations system has embraced the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS as the framework for action at country level. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is leading the way, and its Co-sponsors and Secretariat have accepted special responsibility in their respective areas of expertise, including:

- the United Nation’s Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for orphans and vulnerable children;
- the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for governance and development planning;
- the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for condom programming for prevention of HIV among young people;
- the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) for injecting drug use;
- the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for the world of work;
- the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the educational sector;
- the World Health Organization (WHO) for care and support within the health sector and prevention of HIV transmission to pregnant women, mothers and children;
- the World Bank for evaluation of HIV/AIDS programmes at country level and economic impact; and
- the Secretariat for overall co-ordination, and monitoring and evaluation.

The approach adopted by UNAIDS is based on three principles:

- The implementation of the Declaration of Commitment is a collective responsibility. Implementation depends on the full cooperation of governments, civil society and the United Nations system.
- The Declaration of Commitment should be implemented by strengthening existing capacities, mechanisms and processes. The objective is not to create new initiatives, but rather to mainstream the Declaration into the core business of governments.
- The Declaration of Commitment is a unifying and motivational tool. The Declaration provides a unique opportunity for advocacy and action.

The UNAIDS Secretariat has also facilitated a number of follow-up activities with other UN organizations such as with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program to begin to identify and launch a collaborative effort to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on agriculture, food security and rural poverty. The Secretariat will continue to facilitate action in key areas not covered by other UN organizations (e.g., men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers).
One of the priorities for UNAIDS has been the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework to help countries identify the strengths and weaknesses in their HIV/AIDS programmes and areas requiring greater attention and support (see separate article). UNAIDS is providing technical assistance to some countries with respect to the conduct of these national reviews. As well, UNAIDS is responsible for coordinating the preparation of the Secretary General’s annual report on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment.

UNAIDS is developing materials in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Russian) designed to disseminate information on the Declaration of Commitment as well as the text of the Declaration itself. The following is a list of the materials along with information on their current status.

- **Text of the Declaration.** Available in booklet form. Can be obtained at the UNAIDS booth at the Barcelona Conference or by contacting the UNAIDS information centre (see contact information for UNAIDS in separate box). Electronic versions of the text are available via the website of UNAIDS at <www.unaids.org>. Look under “UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS.”

- **User-friendly version of the Declaration.** Completed. Will be made available at the Barcelona Conference and will be on the website on UNAIDS at <www.unaids.org> in July 2002.

- **Poster on the Declaration.** Being developed. Should be available before the end of 2002.

- **Brochures highlighting sections of the Declaration on Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA); youth; and the role of business.** Being developed. Should be available in December 2002.

UNAIDS is promoting the Declaration of Commitment at conferences and other key events. It is also working to ensure that the Declaration is integrated into broader HIV/AIDS advocacy and communication strategies throughout the UN system. The Secretariat sent a Guidance Note to all UN Country Teams to ensure that HIV/AIDS is included as a top priority.

UNAIDS is planning several activities to strengthen civil society involvement in the follow-up to the Declaration of Commitment. These include involving key organizations and networks in discussions on follow-up strategy and in the preparation of Secretary General’s annual progress report on HIV/AIDS; and identifying 4-5 countries in which involvement of civil society in national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can be used as a model for other countries. UNAIDS also provided the funding for this Update.
Strategies for NGOs to Follow

How can NGOs use the Declaration of Commitment to enhance the response to HIV/AIDS? The following strategies, which were included in the Advocacy Guide to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, prepared by ICASO in October 2001, remain valid today:

- Disseminate the Declaration of Commitment widely to government officials, NGOs and other organizations and people working in HIV/AIDS.

- Hold your government accountable for following through on the commitments it made in the Declaration of Commitment and at UNGASS by:
  - developing and implementing lobby and advocacy plans;
  - organizing meetings with other HIV/AIDS NGOs;
  - approaching other individuals working in HIV/AIDS;
  - enlisting the support of the UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS; and
  - following up on commitments made by government representatives in speeches at UNGASS.

- Lobby to be an integral part of the process launched by your government to implement the Declaration.

- Develop and strengthen partnerships with organizations and individuals outside the HIV/AIDS NGO community.

- Develop strategies to monitor implementation of the Declaration of the Commitment in your country.

These strategies are described in much more detail in the Advocacy Guide. Copies are available on the website of ICASO at <www.icaso.org> under “UNGASS.”
Here are some additional strategies that NGOs should consider:

- Identify parts of the Declaration that support your existing advocacy campaigns and priorities (e.g., access to treatment, better HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS workplace policies) and use the Declaration to strengthen your case. This can be effective whether you are speaking to government officials, the media, or other individuals and organizations.

- Use the Declaration to argue for the development of a national HIV/AIDS plan in your country. If your country already has a national HIV/AIDS plan, use the Declaration as an argument for strengthening the strategy.

- Offer to assist your government to develop strategies to implement the Declaration.

- Use the Declaration to argue for a greater role for NGOs and persons living with HIV/AIDS in your country’s response to HIV/AIDS.

- Use the Declaration as a benchmark against which you can assess government initiatives. For example, if your government announces a strategy for reducing HIV infection among young people, compare the strategy against what is called for in the Declaration.

- Officially endorse the Declaration. Many NGOs have found this to be a useful strategy because it demonstrates to governments that the NGOs want to work in partnership. (Visit the ICASO website at <www.icaso.org> for more information on how to endorse the Declaration. Click on “UNGASS.”)

- Ask your government to provide funding to enable NGOs to monitor the implementation of the Declaration.

- Promote the Declaration whenever you speak to groups about HIV/AIDS.

- Use the Declaration to support your funding proposals. For NGOs working within Coordinating Country Mechanisms, use the Declaration to support submissions to the Global Fund Against AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

- Use the Declaration as a tool for planning your own HIV/AIDS programmes.
Special Envoy Idea Receives Support

The Australian Proposal

The idea of appointing regional Special Envoys on HIV/AIDS at the United Nations appears to be gaining popularity. In the last year or so, the UN has appointed two Special Envoys on HIV/AIDS, one for Africa and the other for Asia. The Government of Australia has proposed that Special Envoys should be appointed specifically to promote the Declaration of Commitment. This proposal has been endorsed by the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO).

The Declaration of Commitment recognizes that strong leadership at all levels of society, including governments, is essential for an effective response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Australia believes that the momentum created by the United Nations Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) has slowed considerably since the session was held in June 2001, and that new high-level initiatives are needed to recapture this momentum. In May 2002, the Hon. Alexander Downer, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Australia, wrote to Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General to propose two possible measures “to generate and sustain the necessary leadership and commitment among member states.” Mr. Downer proposed:

- that the Secretary-General Annan appoint a series of special envoys for HIV/AIDS to cover key regions and country groups; and

- that the Secretary-General create a small high-level advisory group on the implementation of the Declaration, to be known as the UNGASS Declaration Champions Group.

According to the Australian proposal, a key role for the Special Envoys would be to champion the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment to senior officials in government and to key elements of civil society. Australia suggests that the Special Envoys be individuals of stature who have the capacity to work with a diverse range of individuals, including government leaders and officials, community organisers, business leaders and health professionals; and that the Special Envoys not be full-time, but rather be engaged in high level lobbying and negotiating for two to three months each year. The Special Envoys would report directly to the Secretary-General, with support being provided by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).
Australia believes that the appointment of these special envoys would send a strong signal that the UN is fully committed to working with member states in implementing the commitments contained in the Declaration.

Australia proposes that the UNGASS Declaration Champions Group be made up of the Special Envoys and a small number of civil society representatives. The main role of the Champions Group would be to advise the Secretary-General on the implementation and follow-up of the Declaration of Commitment. The group would also provide the Special Envoys with a forum to discuss strategies for approaching governments and civil society in their respective regions. Australia suggests that the Champions Group meet once or twice a year.

UN Appointments

In June 2001, just prior to the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment, Kofi Annan appointed Stephen Lewis as his Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Mr. Lewis is a former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and served as Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) from 1995 to 1999.

Stephen Lewis: stephenlewis@aol.com

In May 2002, Mr. Annan appointed Nafis Sadik, the former Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), as his Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia. Dr. Sadik is responsible for promoting the Declaration of Commitment throughout the region. Mr. Annan indicated that Dr. Sadik’s duties include meeting with high-level government officials to promote key issues, while encouraging celebrities and other influential persons to get involved in the fight against AIDS. Dr. Sadik is working closely with the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Dr. Sadik is from Pakistan.

Nafis Sadik: sadik@unfpa.org / murdock@unfpa.org
Plans for Monitoring and Evaluating the Implementation of the Declaration

The Declaration of Commitment contains a number of targets and commitments, most of which are at the national level. How will we measure the progress of national governments in achieving these targets and delivering on these commitments? The Declaration itself requires that governments conduct national periodic progress reviews (with the participation of civil society and people living with HIV/AIDS) and disseminate the results widely. It also requires that governments develop “appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms” and instruments.1

At the global level, the Declaration provides that the UN Secretary General will prepare an annual progress report and that this report will be reviewed and debated at an annual session of the UN General Assembly that will last at least one full day.2 The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is currently coordinating the preparation of the first report of the Secretary-General on progress made since the UNGASS session in June 2001. This report will be discussed at the 57th session of the UN General Assembly scheduled for the last half of September 2002.

UNAIDS and its partners3 have been developing a monitoring and evaluation framework, which consists primarily of a set of indicators at national and global levels to monitor progress towards achieving the goals and targets included in the Declaration of Commitment. A first draft of the indicators was developed in October 2001. Since then, working drafts have been reviewed by a variety of stakeholders. A list of proposed indicators was presented to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) at the end of May 2002 for endorsement. The indicators are being revised to take into account some of the comments provided by PCB members. A final set of indicators, together with guidelines on how they should be used, is expected to be released by the time of the Barcelona conference.

Indicators have been developed at national and global levels. At the national level, the indicators are divided into three categories:

National Action.
These indicators measure the progress of national governments in policy development and resource allocation.

National Programmes.
These indicators seek to measure progress in nine areas: knowledge among young people on HIV/AIDS; condom use among young people; HIV/AIDS policies and programmes in the workplace; life skills based HIV/AIDS education; adoption of safer behaviours among injecting drug users; management of sexually transmitted diseases; prevention of mother to child transmission; treatment; and impact mitigation.

National Impact.
The impact of national efforts will be measured by two indicators. One focuses on the prevalence of HIV among young people; the other on the extent of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

1 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, paragraphs 94 and 95.
2 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, paragraph 100.
3 Partners refers to the respective monitoring and evaluation focal points of the eight UN co-sponsors of UNAIDS, and to the Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG). The latter is an independent body of technical experts drawn from academic institutions, UN agencies, bilateral agencies and other partners. It was created by the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board to provide independent technical advice on any matters pertaining to monitoring and evaluation.
At the global level, five key indicators have been developed to measure progress in resource mobilization, policy development and advocacy.

The plan is that each year countries will be asked to report on progress using these indicators. The inputs received from governments will be synthesized into the annual progress report of the Secretary General. It is this report that will be debated at the UN General Assembly's annual review. For 2002, since the indicators were not ready, a questionnaire on national policies and strategies and resources was sent to all governments to gather information for the first report to be presented to the General Assembly in September.

It is important to note that although the indicators will be used for reporting purposes, their primary purpose is to assist in improving national AIDS programmes. Based on experience gained during the first few years, the indicators will be further refined.
ICASO, the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations, works to strengthen the community-based response to HIV/AIDS, by connecting and representing NGOs throughout the world. Founded in 1991, ICASO operates from regional secretariats based on all five continents, guided by a central secretariat in Canada.

www.icaso.org