25 August 1995

Dear Colleague,

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

I am pleased to enclose a copy of the letter on the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) signed by all six co-sponsors. The letter reaffirms the commitment of the United Nations system to respond effectively to the HIV epidemic in a unified and coordinated manner. As United Nations Resident Coordinators, you are kindly requested to distribute this letter to country representatives.

Within an enabling environment provided by a coordinated United Nations system response at headquarters level, the theme group you will be establishing should assist in helping to build on what has already been achieved at country level and to enhance and facilitate the assistance provided by each of the co-sponsoring organizations, other organizations of the UN system and, where appropriate, other external support agencies.

As stated in the attached letter, much still remains to be determined about how exactly UNAIDS and its staff will function with respect to country operations. I am inviting you, and your inter-agency country team, to be active participants in this process. To that end, I am attaching excerpts from the report of the Joint and Co-Sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS submitted by the Secretary-General to the substantive session of 1995 of the Economic and Social Council (E/1995/71). Please note that the functions and proposed operational framework as well as resource mobilization and management will be refined on the basis of a number of specific activities, including a series of country visits (Honduras, Vietnam and Zambia) planned by the Executive Director of the Joint Programme and to include representatives of the co-sponsors, bilateral donors and NGOs. I would appreciate it if you could keep me and the Executive Director of the Joint Programme informed about your progress in establishing and supporting the theme group, and submit your ideas on how the proposed arrangements could be further improved.

Yours sincerely,

James Gustave Speth

ADDRESS TO ALL UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATORS
JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
(UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank)

To Country Representatives
through Resident Coordinators

14 August 1995

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to bring you up-to-date on a new venture in the United Nations system of which you may already be aware: the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Co-sponsored by UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank, and endorsed by governing bodies of the cosponsors as well as by ECOSOC (resolution 1994/24), UNAIDS is presently in the process of being set up and will be fully operational by January 1996. Through UNAIDS, the six cosponsors will join forces in a single effort to help the world challenge and live with HIV/AIDS. Its purpose is to draw upon the breadth of experiences and scope of action offered by its six cosponsors while ensuring maximum complementarity of the activities and cooperation offered by each of our agencies.

At the global level, UNAIDS serves as the UN system’s primary source of policy and technical guidance on HIV/AIDS. At the country level, UNAIDS endeavours to enhance and facilitate cooperation among the six cosponsors. Its major objective will be to help build national and local capabilities to respond to HIV/AIDS by ensuring effective and coordinated support by the UN system, expediting the contribution of bilateral or multilateral inputs and by providing technical support as appropriate. Structurally, at country level UNAIDS will operate on the basis of the Resident Coordinator system, and the mechanisms laid out in General Assembly resolution 47/199 where applicable. The Resident Coordinator will ensure that a UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS brings together the representatives of the cosponsors and other UN agencies, bilateral contributors, IGOs and NGOs.

Much still remains to be determined about how exactly UNAIDS and its staff will function with respect to country operations. Already, however, you should begin discussing with the Resident Coordinator how to establish a UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, or how you may strengthen it if you already have one. As the details of the new programme unfold, you will be kept informed of developments by periodic letters sent to you by UNAIDS and its Executive Director, Dr Peter Piot.

We are aware that UNAIDS represents an almost totally new approach to the cooperative efforts of our respective agencies. We are counting on you to facilitate the work of UNAIDS and thereby make our joint efforts strong enough, coordinated enough and broad enough to help the world cope with the enormous challenge of HIV/AIDS.

As it represents a new type of cooperative venture on the part of our agencies, we are convinced that the success or failure of UNAIDS will undoubtedly have important repercussions for the future role of the United Nations system which are presently being contemplated at the level of Governments. It is therefore imperative for each and every one of us to demonstrate that we are not only willing but capable of working in a coherent and concerted manner.

Yours faithfully,

Pedro Mayor
Director-General
United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization

Hiroshi Nakajima
Director-General
World Health Organization

Carol Bellamy
Executive Director
United Nations Children’s Fund

Naifa Sadik
Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund

James D. Wolfensohn
President
The World Bank

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