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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

United Nations Development Programme

Civil Society Consultation on the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on
HIV and AIDS

30 April – 1 May 2014
Bangkok, Thailand

**REPORT OF THE
CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION ON THE
ASIA-PACIFIC INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON HIV AND AIDS**

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I. BACKGROUND

1. Recognizing the vital role that civil society plays in advancing the HIV and AIDS agenda in the region, ESCAP, in cooperation with UNAIDS and UNDP, organized the Civil Society Consultation to prepare for the forthcoming Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS on 30 April and 1 May 2014 in Bangkok.
2. The Consultation was attended by representatives of 13 civil society organizations operating at the regional or subregional level, with an established record of working in the area of legal and policy barriers to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. The full list of participants is included as Annex I.
3. The Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS will be convened by ESCAP from 28 to 30 January 2015 in Bangkok, in cooperation with UNAIDS, UNDP and other relevant United Nations entities, on the critical issue of addressing legal and policy barriers to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. The Intergovernmental Meeting will review the progress made in implementing the commitments made by member States in ESCAP resolutions 66/10 and 67/9 and the 2011 General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, as well as the regional framework for action on HIV and AIDS, or “ESCAP Roadmap to 2015”.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION

4. The objectives of the Consultation were:
 - a) to provide representatives of civil society with an overview of ESCAP intergovernmental processes and the current status of preparations for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS;
 - b) to identify the priority issues from the standpoint of civil society that should be discussed during the Intergovernmental Meeting;
 - c) to discuss potential elements of a regional framework for action that could be endorsed by the Intergovernmental Meeting; and
 - d) to begin to define civil society contributions to, and participation in, the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS and its preparatory process.

III. OPENING OF THE CONSULTATION

5. Welcome remarks were delivered by Ms. Nanda Krairiksh, Director, Social Development Division (SDD), ESCAP and Mr. Tony Lisle, Regional Programme Adviser, UNAIDS Regional Support Team Asia and the Pacific. Opening addresses were made by Mr. J.V.R. Prasada Rao, United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific and Ms. Nukshinaro Ao, Women Coordinator, Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV / AIDS (APN+) on behalf of civil society.

6. Ms. Krairiksh began her intervention by highlighting ESCAP's focus on supporting ESCAP member States in creating enabling legal and policy environments for effective HIV responses, beginning notably with the adoption of ESCAP resolution 66/10. Ms. Krairiksh emphasized the importance of ESCAP's collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs) in light of their knowledge and on-the-ground experiences. She noted the central role played by them in shaping the outcomes of the 2012 Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Assessment of Progress against Commitments in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC) in 2013. Ms. Krairiksh stated that she looked forward to engaging with CSOs in the preparatory process, as well as in identifying the key issues regarding the HIV response that should be addressed in the development agenda beyond 2015. She ended by expressing her gratitude to the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, UNAIDS and UNDP for the close partnership and cooperation in addressing legal and policy barriers to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

7. In his remarks on behalf of UNAIDS, Mr. Tony Lisle emphasized that the 2011 Political Declaration reflected the success of ESCAP resolutions 66/10 and 67/9. Both resolutions highlighted the centrality of communities and key populations and clearly delineated methods of implementation to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Mr. Lisle pointed out that, while much had been achieved in the HIV response, challenges remained in the region, including ensuring sustainable investments to sustain and scale up the HIV response, especially in lower-income countries; building community capacity to effectively provide HIV responses, particularly community-based prevention, testing, treatment and care; adjusting programming across countries so that key populations are effectively engaged in the HIV response; and addressing structural, social and legal barriers.

8. Mr. J.V.R. Prasada Rao, United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, thanked ESCAP for its energy and commitment in bringing out resolution 66/10 at a critical time, noting that ESCAP has been the only Commission to adopt a strong resolution that explicitly refers to specific key populations. He described the Asia-Pacific region's successes in responding to HIV as mixed – while some countries have witnessed progress in reducing or stabilizing the epidemic, the number of new infections in other countries was on the rise. Mr. Rao referred to recommendations of the Global Commission on HIV and Law, and noted a number of countries in the region still had travel restrictions in place, and that, there had been little progress in addressing the needs of some key populations, such as injecting drug users, transgendered persons and men who have sex with men. He further noted further challenges in the region, including the fact that only about eight per cent of funding for HIV and AIDS is used for prevention among key populations at higher risk of HIV exposure. Mr. Rao noted the need for a focus on effectiveness and efficiency of spending, and a need to provide technical support and advocacy in ensuring renewed efforts to halt and reverse the epidemic.

9. In her remarks, Ms. Nukshinara Ao, Women Coordinator, Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+), indicated the need to scale up community capacity to provide care and support for people living with or affected by HIV, and to ensure future access to medicines. She also highlighted the

importance of ensuring the visibility of communities' agendas at high-level meetings convened by the United Nations, and a strong outcome of the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS to be held in January 2015.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION

10. This session was facilitated by Mr. Tony E. Lisle, Regional Programme Adviser, UNAIDS Regional Support Team Asia and the Pacific, who began by leading a round of introductions of the participants. Ms. Maren Jimenez, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division, ESCAP, provided an overview of the status of the preparations for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS, and an introduction to the programme of the Consultation. An overview was also provided on the focus and the expected outcomes of the discussions under each agenda session.

11. In the discussions that followed, the secretariat elaborated on the ways in which the views of CSOs had been incorporated into the preparatory process so far, and how this would be ensured in the future in the lead up to the Intergovernmental Meeting.

V. POSITIONING THE HIV AND AIDS RESPONSE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC BEYOND 2015

12. This session was facilitated by Mr. J.V.R. Prasada Rao, United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific. In his introduction, Mr. Rao identified the following key features that he felt would define the HIV responses in the development agenda beyond 2015: (i) a number of countries in the region were committing increased amounts of domestic resources for HIV, but the trend needed to be maintained and accelerated; (ii) more funds had to be directed to prevention, in particular among key populations; and (iii) more attention had to be accorded to ensuring effective and efficient use of funds allocated for the HIV response. Mr. Rao also briefed the meeting on the ongoing discussions in the open working group on the SDGs (OWG) with regard to the discussions on health and HIV issues.

13. During the discussions that followed, civil society representatives highlighted several issues that should be taken into consideration while framing an effective response to HIV in the post-2015 period. These included funding for intervention targeting key populations, communities and human rights; an increase in domestic financing; and continued international funding for the HIV response. Participants noted that while good progress had been made towards achieving some of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), much remained to be done.

14. Regarding the SDGs, the consultation noted the proposal by the OWG to have a single overarching health goal ("A healthy life for all at all ages"), to be underpinned by sub-goals covering specific health issues. However, there was a need to ensure that HIV and AIDS received due attention in the formulation of the sub-goals. It was important that the sub-goal on HIV be framed to clearly address issues such as violence, stigma and discrimination. As the SDGs would be formulated

through a negotiated process among governments, it was noted that civil society and the United Nations system should support governments to ensure that HIV was given due importance.

15. Based on the experience of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (2013), the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (2014) and other international processes, participants discussed the current conservative political climate, and highlighted the need to be strategic in terms of the desired outcomes of the Intergovernmental Meeting. Participants agreed on the need to use and build on existing commitments in order to safeguard advances made in recent years. Understanding the current positions of governments as well as of CSOs on key issues during the Intergovernmental Meeting was also highlighted as an important step in the preparatory process.

16. Participants indicated discussions among the Eleventh International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP), concluded that civil society would like to see in terms of funding for HIV: funding for key populations, communities and human rights; an increase in domestic financing; and a call to the international community to continue financing the HIV response in Asia and the Pacific.

17. As a result of the discussions, participants suggested that the following actions be undertaken by the Secretariat during the preparatory process leading up to the IGM:

- a) Conduct a political mapping of government positions on HIV-related topics;
- b) Highlight best practices from the region in the background documentation for the Meeting to further inspire countries that have taken steps to implement commitments, and serve as encouragement for those countries that are behind in the process;
- c) Provide a hyperlink on the internet to guide CSOs to the findings and recommendations of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law from the ESCAP Social Development Division website; and
- d) Explore possibilities to provide financial support for civil society representation in national delegations.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM PREVIOUS INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS

18. The session was facilitated by Ms. Nanda Krairiksh, Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP, who shared experiences in civil society engagement in previous intergovernmental processes led by ESCAP. Based on those experiences, Ms. Krairiksh indicated some potential entry points for civil society engagement in the Intergovernmental Meeting and its preparatory process as a basis for the ensuing discussion.

19. Ms. Krairiksh explained that the background documentation for the Intergovernmental Meeting, which would be based on the results of a survey distributed to ESCAP member States, would serve as a basis for deliberations by

Government delegations. She cited the example of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003–2012, where a survey was distributed both to governments in the region as well as to civil society; the latter in order to garner perspectives of civil society on the implementation of region-specific and international commitments on disability.

20. For the 2015 Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS, the secretariat would follow the procedure established by the 2012 Intergovernmental Meeting in that invitations would be extended to civil society organizations operating at the regional and subregional levels, and would not be limited to only those with ECOSOC accreditation. Ms. Krairiksh highlighted that the chairs of previous intergovernmental meetings had called on civil society representatives to deliver one consolidated CSO statement. The consolidated statement conveyed a unified strong voice on behalf of civil society.

21. Governments would also be encouraged to include civil society representatives as members of their official delegations. Ms. Krairiksh noted that the composition of national delegations had a significant bearing on the success of an intergovernmental meeting.

22. The Consultation discussed the current conservative political climate in relation to issues surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, and recalled recent experiences during negotiations of the outcome document of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference and the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development.

23. Participants highlighted the importance of civil society presence during the Intergovernmental Meeting, the role of the chair in ensuring the successes of the Intergovernmental Meeting, and the need to identify potential champions among the delegates nominated to attend the Intergovernmental Meeting.

VII. POTENTIAL AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

24. Mr. Srinivas Tata, Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP, facilitated this session. Mr. Tata provided an update on the status of the ESCAP roadmap to 2015, indicating that 18 countries had completed or were in the process of conducting national reviews and multisectoral consultations on legal and policy barriers to universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

25. Ms. Emilie Pradichit, Human Rights and Advocacy Officer, UNDP APRC, shared her experience as a staff member of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law Secretariat, indicating that national consultations provided examples of how multisectoral dialogues could aid in creating more enabling legal and policy environments. Ms. Pradichit also emphasized the key role of CSOs working together to change social environments and behavioural practices. She noted that many good examples of CSOs working with law enforcement officers existed. For instance, CSOs were sensitizing and training law enforcement officials on critical HIV-related legal

and human rights issues to create safe spaces and enabling environments for key populations.

26. Participants discussed the need to engage and make use of existing subregional platforms, such as ASEAN and SAARC, in the preparatory process for the Intergovernmental Meeting.

27. Participants highlighted the need to involve youth in the Intergovernmental Meeting and its preparatory process, and to explicitly include the needs and roles of young key affected populations in the outcome document of the Intergovernmental Meeting.

28. The Consultation discussed the upcoming report of the High Level Advisory Panel on the AIDS Funding Landscape in Asia Pacific to be launched at the 2014 International AIDS Conference. Initial findings from the Panel indicated that treatment programmes were adequately funded, but funding for prevention and enabling environments was inadequate and decreasing.

29. As a result of the discussion during the session, civil society representatives provided the following suggestions for elements of a regional framework on HIV and AIDS to be considered by Governments at the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS:

- a) Build upon existing commitments and the successes of the ESCAP roadmap endorsed by ESCAP member States in 2012;
- b) Continue focusing on creating enabling legal and policy environments;
- c) Emphasize the need for continued multi-sectoral cooperation;
- d) Ensure value-addition through focusing on the following:
 - community engagement in programme delivery, funding and addressing structural, cultural and social barriers;
 - strengthened domestic financing of HIV responses through innovative financing strategies, including private-public partnerships, etc.;
 - the needs and roles of young key populations;
 - regional accountability mechanisms, such as high level meetings

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