

29 April 2016

H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly  
H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Co-facilitator, High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS  
H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Mr. Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director

We, the undersigned civil society organizations from around the world, are writing to you to express our profound outrage at the exclusion of a significant number of civil society organizations from the list of organizations published today, accredited to attend the upcoming High Level Meeting on AIDS on June 6th to 8th 2016.

This exclusion is unacceptable, and we call on you to use your fullest influence and understanding of UN processes to work with the General Assembly to reverse this egregious decision.

Whether by intention or omission, community organizations from populations most directly affected by HIV have been excluded, namely Men Who Have Sex With Men, Transgender People, People Who Use Drugs, People Living with HIV, Positive Youth Groups, as well as several major global and regional civil society networks. We cannot on one hand talk about Key Populations and on the other hand exclude their voice from the highest level forum in the global response to HIV.

This decision goes against the principles of inclusivity and solidarity that both the President of the General Assembly and the Co-Facilitators clearly stated at beginning of the process:

“Also with regard to stakeholder engagement, delegations will recall that on 30 March, I circulated the list – of NGOs, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector who applied to attend the High-level meeting in June – for consideration of Member States on a non-objection basis. Given the important contribution of civil society, private sector and other stakeholders in the AIDS response, and in order to ensure an inclusive and participatory HLM, I call on Member States to extend their full support to stakeholder participation and approve this list as soon as possible.” (1)

“... No member state can deny that it is legally bound to ensure that all people enjoy their human rights without discrimination – and this includes discrimination against those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.” (2)

This decision is also a direct rebuff to the Secretary General’s own advocacy to strengthen the rights of and engagement with LGBTI communities around the world:

“And I say to members of the LGBT community: the United Nations will always stand with you in your fight for recognition, respect and rights.” (3)

Further – and perhaps most critically – the draft Political Declaration is itself underpinned by the clear evidence that involving vulnerable populations most affected by HIV – particularly Men Who Have Sex With Men, People Who Use Drugs, Transgender People, and Sex Workers – is essential to mounting an effective response to end AIDS, and helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Is this not the fundamental purpose of holding this High Level Meeting? Does this foreshadow what civil society can expect from UN Member States in the final Political Declaration?

By excluding organizations from these communities, the General Assembly is sending a terrible message to the world that it is prepared to let discrimination and prejudice yet again hamper our collective efforts to end AIDS. It also signals a disregard for communities most affected by HIV worldwide and Member State intentions to weaken the outcome of the High Level Meeting through exclusion and subsequent omission.

We appreciate that your offices have been and continue to advocate for inclusivity and equity in our efforts to reach the SDGs. Moreover, we understand that the challenges faced in mounting an effective AIDS response may continue to be sensitive for some governments. However, we urge the General Assembly to show moral and political leadership. June’s High Level Meeting on AIDS is an occasion of great importance to all who work to bring the global HIV epidemic under control. We cannot afford to fail.

We therefore call upon the GA to reverse and reconsider the exclusion of the groups so far excluded from the accredited list of civil society organizations, and work with us to ensure a powerful, inclusive outcome in June that will drive the world’s effective response to AIDS over the next fifteen years.

Sincerely,

Affirmative Action  
African Services Committee  
Aids Fonds  
AIDS-Fondet  
AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention  
Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network  
Canadian Positive People Network (CPPN)  
Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition  
Coalition of Asia-Pacific Regional Networks on HIV/AIDS  
Damj pour la justice et l'egalite  
Eurasian Coalition on Male Health  
Eurasian Women's network on AIDS  
EVE for Life  
GESTOS– Soropositividade, Comunicação e Gênero and LACCASO  
Global Network of People Living with HIV North America (GNP+NA)  
GNP+  
Guyana Trans United (GTU)  
Harm Reduction International  
Health GAP (Global Access Project)  
Hornet Gay Social Network  
Housing Works, Inc.  
ICASO  
International Civil Society Support  
Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD)  
International HIV/AIDS Alliance  
International Indigenous Working Group on HIV & AIDS  
International Women's Health Coalition  
ITPC MENA  
Jamaican Forum for Lesbians All Sexuals and Gays (JFLAG)  
M-Coalition  
MSMGF (Global Forum on MSM & HIV)  
OutRight Namibia (ORN)  
Pangaea Global AIDS  
Positive Action for Treatment Access (PATA) Nigeria  
Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI)  
Salud por Derecho  
STOPAIDS, UK  
The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS  
The International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW)  
The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)  
Tunisian Association of Positive Prevention  
Union of Women of Ukraine affected by HIV "Positive Women"  
WACI Health  
Yale Global Health Justice Partnership  
Yugoslav Youth Association Against AIDS - Youth of JAZAS

#### References

- 1) Opening remarks by H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, at informal meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, New York, April 2016
- 2) Opening remarks by H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, at the Economic Cost of LGBT Exclusion, New York, December 2015
- 3) UN Secretary-General's remarks at the High Level LGBT Core Group Event "Leaving No-One Behind: Equality & Inclusion in the Post-2015 Development Agenda", New York, September 2015