

UNGASS: Update and Next Steps IV

PREPARED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF AIDS SERVICE ORGANISATIONS (ICASO)
JUNE 18, 2001

This document contains an update on the Declaration of Commitment for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) and on the Special Session itself. This is the fifth in a series of documents from ICASO on the UNGASS process. The titles of the first four documents are:

- ❑ *A Guide for Meaningful Involvement of NGOs and Civil Society* (February 26, 2001)
- ❑ *Next Steps for Involvement of NGOs and Civil Society* (March 15, 2001)
- ❑ *UNGASS: Update and Next Steps II* (May 11, 2001)
- ❑ *UNGASS: Update and Next Steps III* (June 7, 2001)

Copies of all five documents are available in English, French and Spanish on the ICASO website at <http://www.icaso.org>.

This document provides information that was current on June 18, 2001. Please remember that the situation with respect to UNGASS is constantly evolving.

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1.0 Update on the Declaration

With only a week to go until the Special Session, on June 25-27, 2001 in New York, the text of the final Declaration of Commitment is still not decided. Most of the outstanding issues are not considered to be controversial. However, there is still an impasse around the listing of vulnerable populations and the references to human rights.

Country delegations are expected to meet in a closed session on Saturday, June 23, to finalize the text. There is still a chance that a consensus will be found. If there is no consensus, the text of the Declaration will be put to a vote. ICASO continues to work toward a strongly worded Declaration. ICASO does not support any compromise that would weaken the Declaration by removing men who have sex with men, sex trade workers or injection drug users from the list of vulnerable groups, or by removing references to a human rights-based approach and the *International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights*. These are basic principles that we do not want to compromise on.

It is therefore critical to continue to influence national governments on the contents of the Declaration. NGOs and PWAs both inside and outside the national delegations will need to lobby their national delegations to ensure that they do not agree to any compromise that would violate these principles and weaken the final text. Whatever final form the Declaration takes, civil society actors will also need to focus at the Special Session on building global alliances and partnerships for follow-up advocacy and implementation related to the commitments contained in the Declaration.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS REQUIRED:

Here are some actions NGOs can take immediately and at the Special Session itself:

- ❑ *If your government has not already included NGO and PWA representatives on its UNGASS delegation, you should be actively lobbying for such participation. It is not too late. At the Second Informal Consultation Meeting in May, some country delegations decided on the spot to add NGO representation.*
- ❑ *Contact the members of your country delegation to let them know your position. Urge them not to compromise on the Declaration. Use this opportunity to influence your delegation on the statement it will deliver during the plenary session at UNGASS. NGO representatives who have been included in the country delegations may be able to help draft this statement. If you will be in New York during the Special Session, request a meeting with your country delegation in New York.*
- ❑ *Fax letters to (a) Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General, (b) Harri Holkeri, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, and (c) your Ministry of Health or Foreign Affairs, and/or your UN Mission in New York. These letters should express support for a strongly worded Declaration and opposition to any compromise around vulnerable groups and human rights. (See the contact information box at the end of the document for fax numbers for Mr. Annan and Mr. Holkeri.)*
- ❑ *Contact the media in your country and let them know your position on the Declaration. If you will be in New York for the Special Session, let your media contacts know how to reach you there.*

- ❑ *Start talking to your government now about what will happen after UNGASS. Ask for a meeting with your country delegation to review what happened at UNGASS and to discuss how your country will implement the commitments in the Declaration.*

The statement your government makes at UNGASS could be a useful document for future lobby and advocacy work in your country. You will be able to remind your government of the content of the statement and to push for implementation of any commitments made therein.

2.0 Events of the Special Session

The governmental component of the Special Session itself will take place at the United Nations Building on 1st Avenue between 42nd and 47th Streets. Information on the plenary sessions and round tables is provided below. More details will be presented at the NGO Orientation Session on June 24.

2.1 Plenary Sessions

Plenary sessions will happen each day, from Monday, June 25, to Wednesday, June 27, at the following hours: 09h00–13h00, 15h00-18h00, 19h00-21h00. Each country will make a five minute statement during the plenary sessions. The sessions will take place in the General Assembly Hall.

NGOs will have 50 seats in the Hall. The process for accessing these limited seats will be announced at the NGO orientation session on Sunday, June 24. We expect that most of the plenary sessions will also be shown on closed circuit monitors in the overflow room in the UN Building.

2.2 Round Table Sessions

There are four round table sessions. They are scheduled during hours when the Plenary sessions are underway. The schedule is as follows:

- ❑ Prevention and Care: Monday, June 25, 15h00-18h00 (*Chaired by the Prime Minister of St. Kitts*)
- ❑ Human Rights: Tuesday, June 26, 09h00-13h00 (*Chaired by the Minister of Health, Poland*)
- ❑ Socio-Economic Impact: Tuesday, June 26, 15h00-18h00 (*Chaired by the Minister of Health, Malaysia*)
- ❑ Resources and Funding: Wednesday, June 27, 09h00-13h00 (*Chaired by the President of Tanzania*)

The format for the round table discussions is an interactive dialogue. UNAIDS co-sponsors are preparing brief background papers of the core issues in order to initiate the discussion. These will be made available to all participants in the form of conference room papers (available in the six official languages of the UN) prior to the Special Session. Participants selected by the General Assembly for the round tables are free to raise any and all issues as they relate to the specific themes.

The round tables are closed sessions. Approximately 65 people will participate in each round table, including members of country delegations, observers, representatives of UN agencies and civil society organisations. The selection of participants will be announced shortly; we expect that 4-8 NGO representatives will be able to attend each round table. These sessions will be shown on closed circuit monitors in the overflow room in the UN Building.

Access to the Plenaries and Round tables is Limited!

Civil society organizations have access to 50 seats in the Plenary which will be shared on a rotating basis. The round tables are open only to participants. Furthermore, only members of country delegations and registered delegates from NGOs that have been accredited to UNGASS can gain access to the UN Building during this period. ECOSOC NGOs with permanent badges will be allowed access to the building, but not to official meetings.

3.0 NGO Sessions Related to the UNGASS Process

An ad-hoc group of NGOs has organised several sessions that relate specifically to the events of the Special Session. These sessions are designed to allow NGOs to share information about what is happening at UNGASS. They include an orientation session, a consultation session on the Declaration, daily briefings, and a session on next steps. Simultaneous interpretation into English, French and Spanish will be provided for all sessions. The schedule for these sessions is as follows:

3.1 Sunday, June 24

The Sunday sessions will take place at the: New York University Farkas Auditorium,
550 First Avenue at 32nd Street, Manhattan.

These sessions are open to representatives from any NGOs and civil society organizations, whether or not they are accredited to UNGASS.

09H00 – 12H00 NGO ORIENTATION SESSION

This session will provide participants with an introduction to the UN system, logistics and security; an overview of civil society participation in UNGASS; an update on the Declaration of Commitment; and information on the parallel events (see below).

13H00 – 16H00 NGO CONSULTATION SESSION

This session will provide participants with an opportunity to review and analyse the Declaration of Commitment.

3.2 Monday, June 25 to Wednesday, June 27

All Monday-to-Wednesday sessions will take place in: Conference Room 4 (UN Building)

Because they are being held inside the UN Building, they are open only to registered delegates from organisations accredited to UNGASS.

Monday, June 25 2001

08H30 – 09H00 NGO BRIEFING

At this briefing (and the other briefings), updates will be provided on the proceedings of the plenary and roundtable sessions, and other key issues for NGOs to consider. These sessions will include updates by NGO representatives participating in the round tables.

18H00 – 19H00 NGO BRIEFING

Tuesday, June 26 2001

08H30 – 09H00 NGO BRIEFING

18H00 – 19H00 NGO BRIEFING

Wednesday, June 27 2001

08H30 – 09H00 NGO BRIEFING

15H00 – 18H00 NGO NEXT STEPS SESSION

This session will provide an opportunity for civil society organisations to discuss how to use the Declaration of Commitment for local and national advocacy work. *The time for this session may be changed to accommodate the schedules of NGOs.*

3.3 Coordinating Centre

An NGO and Civil Society Coordinating Centre will be established in Conference Room A in the UN Building and will function from Monday to Wednesday during UNGASS.

4.0 Parallel Events

There are numerous parallel events inside the UN building (accessible to those with accreditation) and outside the UN at sites across New York City. Information about these events (including several comprehensive listings) has been posted on the Break-the-Silence email discussion forum. You can access these postings through the BTS archives on the website of Health Development Networks at <http://www.hdnet.org>. Click on “UNGASS e-mail discussion forum: Break-the-Silence” and then on “To read previous postings.” If you are interested in participating in any of these events, contact the organizers shown for that event.

One key event is the “Stop Global AIDS” march on Saturday, June 23. The march and rally will feature music and speakers from around the world. The march begins at 11h00 in Washington Square Park and ends at Bryant Park where speakers will issue calls to action. For further information, contact the organizers at info@stopglobalaidsnow.org or call (212) 208-4533.

An updated list of parallel events will be available at the Orientation Session on Sunday, June 24. (see section 3.1)

5.0 Before You Get to New York

5.1 Plan Your Meetings Now

Planning meetings ahead of time will make your trip more productive. The Special Session will be an intense concentration of meetings and people; given the sheer number of events, you can't expect to run into the people you want to meet just by chance. Decide who you want to meet and which events you want to attend.

As a first step, you might want to contact your national delegation and suggest that they hold a meeting with civil society delegates while in New York to discuss the Declaration and next steps. Contact information for all permanent country missions to the United Nations is posted on the UN web site at www.un.org or contact Tanya Jewell who can provide you with the info at icaso@icaso.org

5.2 Confirm Your Hotel Reservation

To avoid any last-minute confusion, we recommend that you contact the New York City hotel where you will be staying to confirm your reservation before you travel. As you are probably aware, inexpensive hotel rooms are difficult to find in New York City at the last minute, so you don't want to be caught without a place to stay. In case you run into trouble in terms of lodging, a list of New York City hotels can be found on the UNGASS web site at www.un.org/ga/aids under the "media" section.

5.3 Plan for Your Per-Diem Costs

New York City can be an expensive place to visit, but it doesn't have to be. At the cafeterias inside the UN buildings, a meal will cost about \$5-7. At restaurants around New York, the cost will be higher. Plan on spending at least \$25 each day that you are in the city.

6.0 Traveling into New York City

6.1 Entry into the United States

The United States consular officers at JFK Airport and Newark Airport have been made aware of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS and the probability of visitors coming into the U.S. in late June with B-1/B-2 visas for this meeting. If you have any problem with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), especially if you are detained for HIV-related reasons, you may call Sam Avrett at (917) 297-8305 at any time from the airport, or the UNAIDS offices at (212) 824-6643 during business hours. A list of attorneys who can provide free legal advice and assistance has been compiled for this purpose and you can be referred to one of these attorneys by calling these numbers.

6.2 Getting from the Airport into Manhattan

To travel from the airports – LaGuardia, JFK and Newark – to Manhattan, follow the signs for "ground transportation" and then look for one of two shuttle services: **Gray Line Air Shuttle**, (1-800) 451-0455 or (212) 315-3006, operates from 07h00 to 23h30, and will bring you from the airport directly to

your hotel for about \$14; **Super Shuttle**, (1-800) 258-3826 or (212) 258-3826), operates throughout the day and night, and will also bring you directly to your hotel for \$15.

6.3 Extending Your Visa

If you need to stay in the United States for several days beyond the period of your visa, you can apply for an extension. In New York City, the U.S. INS offices at 26 Federal Plaza (at Worth Street between Lafayette and Centre Streets) are open for in-person visits Monday to Friday 07h30 to 15h30; they can be reached at (1-800) 375-5283 or (1-800) 870-3676. However, you should know that a U.S. visa extension application process can be a difficult and expensive experience. For questions on this process and other visa and immigration questions, you can contact the Legal Services Department of Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) at (212) 367-1308 or by e-mail at vishalt@gmhc.org.

7.0 Registering for the Special Session

Delegates from organisations that are accredited to UNGASS must register to attend the Special Session (and to obtain a pass to get into the UN Building). Each accredited organisation is allowed to register only four delegates. Registration vans for civil society delegates will be stationed on First Avenue at 47th Street. Delegates must come to the vans in person and must have one piece of picture identification to be registered and to obtain a pass. The hours of registration are as follows:

Wednesday/Thursday/Friday, June 20/21/22:	09h00-13h00 and 14h00-17h00
Saturday, June 23:	09h00-13h00
Sunday, June 24:	09h00-13h00 and 14h00-17h00
Monday, June 25:	08h00-13h00 and 14h00-17h00
Tuesday/Wednesday, June 26/27:	09h00-13h00 and 14h00-17h00

If you have any questions about registration or passes, please contact Bai Bagasao (bagasaob@unaids.org) or at the UNAIDS offices in New York: (212) 326-7021

8.0 Resources in New York City

8.1 Communicating with Other Advocates and with Home

Telephone calls from most hotel rooms will cost considerably more than from public pay phones. You can often find a public pay phone in the lobby of your hotel and you can purchase a prepaid phone card for international calls from many grocery stores and news-stands. Public pay phones are also located inside the UN buildings.

Cell phone rentals: Mobal Communications, 171 Madison Avenue (212) 785-5800

If you are searching for an Internet café, there is a large one called "Easy Everything" near Times Square on the south side of 42nd Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues. It is open 24 hours.

8.2 Accessing Office Support Services Around the UN

Outside the UN buildings, 24-hour computer use, photocopying and faxing services can be purchased at Kinko's at East 46th Street between First and Second Avenue. There is also a new Kinkos on 3rd Avenue, and a Staples at the corner of 3rd Avenue and 42nd Street.

8.3 Accessing the Media

NGOs can arrange press conferences either in the UN Building, in the Church Center, or in area hotels. In order to set up a press conference in the UN, NGOs must be sponsored by their country mission. The Mission should contact Maricel Magas-Sniffen in the UN Spokesman's office at (212) 963-7707 (telephone) or (212) 963-7055 (fax). Media space is available in the Church Center on the first-come-first-served basis. To make reservations, phone Sam Avrett at (212) 824-6643 or (917) 297-8305 or by fax at (212) 824-6493. (See the contact information box at the end of this document for details on the location of the Church Center and for the UNGASS NGO media liaison person who may be able to assist you.)

8.4 Accessing Health and Support Services Around the UN and in New York City

Inside the UN: Emergency medical care will be provided by the UN Medical Service. An emergency medical station and Room C-202 have been set aside for provision of medical and health assistance to delegates during the Special Session from Monday, June 25 to Wednesday, June 27. The UN Medical Service can be contacted during weekdays from 09h00 – 17h00 at (212) 963-8990 and at other times in cases of emergency at (212) 963-6666.

Outside the UN: The nearest **hospital emergency rooms** are at New York University Medical Center at 550 First Avenue at 31st Street, and at Bellevue Hospital Center at 462 First Avenue at 27th Street. St. Vincents Hospital and Medical Center Comprehensive HIV Center is offering **free urgent care** and advice to NGO and government delegates on a 24-hour-7-day-a-week basis at 203 West 12th Street, 1st Floor. On weekdays between 09h00 – 20h00, call (212) 604-1700; at other times call (212) 647-6400. The primary contact for this service is Matt Baney, who can be reached at (212) 604-2900 or mbaney@saintvincentsnyc.org.

A **24-hour pharmacy**, Duane Reade, is located at 47th Street and Lexington Avenue. The nearest Duane Reade pharmacy, not open 24-hours, is located on 2nd Avenue between 45th and 46th Street.

For other health-related information, the GMHC AIDS Hotline is offering information and referrals Monday to Friday from 10h00 – 21h00, and Saturdays from 12h00 – 15h00, at (1-800) AIDS-NYC or (212) 367-6655. One-time only confidential walk-in counselling is available at GMHC from 11h00 – 20h00 Monday through Friday at 119 West 24th Street.

The New York Harm Reduction Coalition has also offered to connect visitors to the harm reduction and syringe exchange programs operating in New York City; the primary contact for these referrals is Donald Grove, who can be reached at (212) 213-6376 or grove@harmreduction.org.

More detailed information on these and other services will be available in the NGO packs distributed at the orientation session.

Contact Information

UN Officials

His Excellency Kofi Annan
Secretary General of the United Nations
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

Fax: (212) 963-2155

His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri
President of the General Assembly
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

Fax: (212) 963-3301

Contact information for all permanent country missions to the United Nations is posted on the UN web site at www.un.org.

Ad-hoc Group of NGOs

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Communications Coordinator, CONGO
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Kim Nichols (liaison with NY groups)
African Services Committee
Email: africanserve@att.net
Telephone: (1-212) 222-3882

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Conference of NGOs (CONGO)

For information and assistance on NGO participation at UNGASS, representatives at CONGO will be able to answer questions and refer people to the appropriate person or agency. While in New York, all Ad-hoc Group members can be reached through the CONGO office:

Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN)
777 UN Plaza (corner of 44th Street and 1st Avenue)
8th Floor
New York NY 10017
www.conferenceofngos.org
Telephone: (1-212) 986-8557