

Ensuring a Bold Response to the Political Declaration Zero Draft: Advocacy Next Steps for the United Nations High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS

April 14, 2016

Last week, over 100 advocates, researchers, policymakers, and mission delegates convened at the United Nations in New York City to attend MSMGF's Side Event [Unfinished Business – Taking bolder action to address HIV among gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men](#), held the day before the [Civil Society Hearings](#) to inform the United Nations High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS (HLM), which will take place June 8-10 in New York City. MSMGF staff also met with several country mission delegations, including the UN Ambassador from Switzerland Jürg Lauber, whose Mission will be co-facilitating the 2016 HLM with the UN Mission from Zambia. Finally, MSMGF met with a coalition of global civil society advocates, with whom we released a [Civil Society Statement of Concern](#) to inform advocacy for the HLM.

As a result of these activities, MSMGF has learned of several key advocacy entry points to influence the HLM political declaration in the lead-up to the HLM in June. These include:

April 15 – Release of the Zero Draft Political Declaration

The UN Mission co-facilitators Switzerland and Zambia have indicated that they will release the “zero draft” of the political declaration on this date. MSMGF hopes that, *at a minimum*, this draft will include critical language from the [2011 Political Declaration](#), including specific mention of key populations most affected by HIV according to epidemiological data, especially gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, sex workers, and transgender women. Ideally, the Zero Draft will go further than the 2011 Political Declaration, including several items discussed in MSMGF's *Unfinished Business* [policy brief](#), such as the need to:

- 1) **Fully fund comprehensive HIV and other STI prevention, care and treatment programs that are competently delivered and tailored to the needs of men who have sex with men** – funding levels should proactively: a) address the disproportionate HIV disease burden and increased HIV transmission rates among men who have sex with men; and b) resource community-based and LGBT-led responses.
- 2) **Ensure universal and unimpeded access to sexual health programs, including HIV and other STI services** – healthcare workers need technical training and support to deliver high quality, evidence informed, and rights-based sexual health services for men who have sex with men.
- 3) **Decriminalize homosexuality** – all socio-structural barriers that impact our communities should be removed, including homophobic laws that criminalize same-sex sexual practices, HIV non-disclosure, exposure, and transmission, sex work, gender non-conformity, and drug use.

Advocates will likely be able to receive the Zero Draft through several sources, possibly through their [UN mission delegations](#) and their local Ministry of Health, and certainly through global civil society organizations including MSMGF. Once advocates receive the Zero Draft, they will have the opportunity to express their concerns and provide feedback in several ways:

- 1) Provide direct feedback to [UN mission delegations in New York City](#). This will be most effective through in-person meetings in New York City but can also occur via requests for email and phone conversations with local country delegates.
- 2) Provide direct feedback via local civil society to government ministries in country capitals. Depending upon the specific country, these ministries will likely include the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In some countries, this may include smaller ministries, such as ministries that address gender, social inclusion, and vulnerable populations.
- 3) Consult with regional civil society partners, who have provided inputs for the HLM political declaration via “regional position statements.” ICASO has compiled them [here](#).

When meeting with and providing feedback to UN delegates and government ministries, it can be especially valuable to provide country-level data to support advocacy requests. Relevant country-level data sources include the [UNAIDS 2015 Progress reports](#), [Global Fund country concept notes](#), and [PEPFAR Country Operational Plan Strategic Direction Summaries](#). It may also be helpful to reference the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), especially SDG #3 “Good Health and Well-Being,” SDG #10 “Reduced Inequalities,” and SDG #16 “Peace and Justice.”

We have furthermore learned that the 2016 HLM will be structured according to the following overall objectives and priorities, and we suggest framing advocacy requests in reference to these points, particularly the “Leaving no-one behind” point:

- AIDS and the SDGs: AIDS out of isolation and connected
- Financing, partnerships and sustainability
- Adolescent girls and young women: preventing HIV
- Leaving no-one behind: Ending stigma and discrimination; Social justice and inclusive societies
- Looming treatment crisis: getting to 90-90-90

April 25 – First Negotiations on the Zero Draft

The first round of negotiations, or “first reading,” of the Zero Draft will occur among UN mission delegations in New York City on April 25th. It will be especially crucial for advocates to provide feedback to delegates and government ministries *before* this first round of negotiations, so as to set the tone for additional negotiation rounds leading up to June. In addition, mission delegations will likely be requesting feedback from government ministries in country capitals between April 15th and April 25th in order to inform their perspectives on the negotiations. As a result, **we emphasize the crucial importance of receiving and reviewing the Zero Draft as soon**

as it is released on April 15th, and then following up with UN delegates and government ministries immediately thereafter.

There will likely be additional advocacy entry points in the weeks after April 25th, and we will continue to provide updates on these opportunities as we learn of them.

June 8-10 – High-Level Meeting in New York City

The Swiss mission delegation has expressed its desire to conclude negotiations *prior to* the HLM itself in June, with member states expected to sign the political declaration at the start of the three-day set of meetings. However, this is not what occurred in 2011, when negotiations continued during the HLM itself, with the political declaration not being approved until the final day of meetings. As a result, MSMGF advises that there may still be significant opportunities to conduct advocacy during the HLM itself in June. We will continue to advise on this possibility as the dates of the meeting approach in June.

Finally, we would appreciate hearing your perspectives on strategies to influence the political declaration that will emerge from the HLM. Please communicate your feedback and any questions/concerns you may have to Nadia Rafif, Director of Policy, at nrafif@msmgf.org. We thank you kindly for your much-appreciated engagement with this critical process.

Kind regards,
The MSMGF