Major and neglected diseases in developing countries

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The Council adopted conclusions on combating HIV/AIDS. It notes in particular that whilst the primary responsibility for health systems resides with the Member States, there is an added-value to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic both at a pan-European and at a global level, including through appropriate development policies.

The Council invites the Member States to :

- promote the implementation of the Dublin "Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia" and the "Vilnius Declaration" from the Ministerial Conference "Europe and HIV/AIDS – New challenges, New Opportunities";

- take further action to ensure that national multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS coordination structures, strategies, and financing plans are implemented, maintained and further developed in cooperation with people living with HIV or affected by HIV and that best practices and experiences are exchanged at Community level;

- take further action to improve general knowledge and raise awareness of the general public on the prevention of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as information on sexual and reproductive health and to develop and implement evidence-based targeted activities to cover particular vulnerable populations;

- take further action to promote safer and responsible sexual behaviour and practices, including through condom use, and scale up access for injecting drug users to prevention, drug dependence treatment and harm reduction services;

- take appropriate action to counsel and support people with HIV/AIDS, their families and their friends; and to establish and maintain, through the appropriate legislative or other means, a respectful, non-discriminatory and accepting societal atmosphere and behaviour towards people with HIV/AIDS;

- continuously work on maintaining and developing a sustainable, affordable, and accessible health care system as a basis for prevention, treatment, and care activities; and in this context pay special attention to the access to affordable anti-retro viral treatment, as well as other medical treatment, for all in need;

- strengthen the co-operation of clinical trials in the continuing search for HIV-vaccines and microbicides in the context of a comprehensive global response, in collaboration with the European Commission and with due reference to the Community framework programme for Research;

- take into account the possibility of using horizontal EC financing instruments in the implementation of comprehensive national strategies;

- continue to work closely together with the European Commission and other relevant international organizations and agencies, when planning and agreeing specific bilateral actions in the context of neighbourhood and development policy.

On the other hand, the Commission is invited to :

- support Member States in their efforts to implement the Dublin and Vilnius declarations;

- contribute to efforts to improve general knowledge and to raise awareness of the general public on the prevention of HIV infection, as well as of other sexually transmitted infections;

- contribute to activities that aim at establishing a respectful, non-discriminatory and accepting societal atmosphere and behaviour towards people with HIV/AIDS;

- facilitate the use of existing EC financing instruments for the implementation of comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategies within the Member States and in neighbouring countries;

- promote the investment in the appropriate research and development of effective behavioural and risk reducing as well as prophylactic measures, such as vaccines and microbicides, and cure;

- encourage the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to further reinforce and coordinate existing activities on the surveillance of communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, in coordination with national institutes and international specialised observatories;

- facilitate the collaboration between the Member States, accession, candidate and neighbouring countries and relevant international organisations in order to promote the exchange of good practices and joint projects;

- promote and continue the dialogue and cooperation with countries at a regional and global level, as well as with international organisations such as UN AIDS, both in health and development policy context, in order to achieve further regional and global progress in the fight against the spread of the HIV.