

Forum della Società  
Civile Italiana  
per la lotta  
all'HIV/AIDS

Roma 12 luglio 2011



 **AIDS**  
**ACTION**  
**EUROPE**



June 6st, 2011

To the EU Missions  
at the United Nations  
New York City, U.S.A.

## **UN General Assembly Comprehensive AIDS review High Level Meeting - Outcome Document**

Italian Civil Society on HIV/AIDS wants to bring to Your attention and to the attention of International Civil Society the most recent developments occurred during the ongoing negotiations on the Zero Draft Outcome Document, in view of the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS.

The undersigned organisations were astonished to learn about the proposal made by the representatives of the Italian Government, who asked for an amendment in paragraph 42 of the Zero Draft Document: the substitution of the words "Harm Reduction", with "Risk Reduction".

It seems hard to believe that Italy - a country where HIV transmission among IDUs was significantly reduced thanks to Harm Reduction measures – aims at undermining European consensus on such a strategic and relevant issue for HIV prevention in occasion of the UN High Level Meeting. The European Civil Society organisations have supported Italian NGOs by endorsing this letter.

In reply to the many protests and complaints addressed to the Government by Italian NGOs, the Department for Anti-Drug Policies, which is a body of the Presidency of the Council of Ministries, declared to be favourable to syringe exchange programs as well as opioid substitution and maintenance treatment. According to the Government, Italian Civil Society is arguing and making a big fuss on something which can be viewed as a merely "lexical detail". "Harm Reduction" in its opinion is a dangerous and poorly defined term which does not indicate with adequate precision the appropriate measures to be adopted to prevent the spread of HIV; "Risk Reduction" should therefore be preferred.

This sounds as an unbelievable excuse; we are extremely concerned about such an extremist position and the unavoidable consequences it might produce. The global extension of Harm Reduction policies is already encountering many obstacles and would be further compromised by the questioning of its definition for reasons that appear to be purely ideological.

Furthermore, removing or amending this terminology would represent a retreat from commitments made by the UN General Assembly in the 2006 Political Declaration (para. 22), the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on AIDS (para. 52); and the Economic and Social Council (Text of the Economic and Social Council resolution E/2009/L.23 adopted by the Council on 24 July 2009, para. 19).

We believe that the insistence of the Italian Government in its attempt to impose the change in question, despite our different conviction, must be viewed as an irresponsible position, particularly in front of the persisting global emergency causing death and suffering in so many countries devastated by drug use and HIV. **We therefore ask that this proposal be rejected by the other countries.**

Signed by:

The Italian HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum  
<http://www.forumhivaid.it>

AIDS ACTION EUROPE  
EATG – European AIDS Treatment Group  
ICW Global  
Coordinamento Italiano Case Alloggio, Italy  
Forum Droghe, Italy  
I Ragazzi della Panchina, Italy

Global Network of Sex Work Projects Scotland UK  
Grupo Português de Activistas sobre Tratamentos de VIH/SIDA, Portugal  
PIAM ONLUS - Progetto Integrazione Accoglienza Migranti, Italia  
Projecte dels NOMS-HISPANOSIDA, Spain  
Sexworker Forum, Vienna Austria  
TAMPEP-Germany  
Harm Reduction International  
Uk Consortium on AIDS & International Development, Inghilterra  
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