

Media Update

14 December 2023

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

Statement by UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Kitty van der Heijden at the conclusion of COP28

NEW YORK, 12 December 2023 – “The COP28 climate negotiations generated welcome breakthroughs on both the urgent need to address the root causes of climate change – fossil fuels – and some glimmers of hope for breakthroughs of climate justice for children. Now to have any hope of turning these words into action, we must see a transformative scale up of climate financing.

“For the first time, the COP paid attention to the unique and disproportionate impacts of climate change on children's health and wellbeing, proposing an ‘expert dialogue’ on this to take place during the official COP process next year. This paves the way for change for the children bearing the brunt of climate chaos, and UNICEF stands ready to support.

“Meanwhile, the global goal on adaptation (GGA), which aims to help countries build up defenses to withstand climate hazards, was strengthened for children. By agreeing to new thematic targets on water, health and nutrition, and referencing social protection and education, the COP has sent a strong signal to relevant Ministries that they must build up the climate resilience of services children need, like schools, health, water and sanitation systems. Now, international adaptation finance must be scaled up to make this a reality.

“And where climate adaptation is missing or has failed, children massively lose out. The loss of life and livelihoods caused by unmanaged climate chaos in the present - driven by historic emissions - is a grave intergenerational injustice borne by children. The decision at COP28 to operationalize and capitalise the Loss and Damage Fund was an important step toward addressing this. If implemented well it should mean that children who survive climate disasters can at least count on their schools being rebuilt, child health services restored, and places to live and play made safe.

“These are welcome and necessary new commitments – achieved in no small part, thanks to the incredible efforts of youth advocates from all over the world, supported by UNICEF.

“Through the GGA and the Loss and Damage Fund, world leaders are beginning to treat the harmful *symptoms* of alarming temperature rises. Yet, until we see timely action to keep temperature rises within the 1.5 degree limit, they will not be treating the root *causes*.

The Global Stocktake (GST) document has broken new ground by acknowledging that limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees requires drastic reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions and a transition away from fossil fuels. We now urgently need clear timelines for achieving this, consistent with both achieving global net zero and with a fast, fair and child-sensitive transition.

“Another future is still possible. A fast, fair and child-sensitive transition offers children a chance of developing new skills, new jobs and building a clean, secure, prosperous world. Children will not and cannot wait for adults to act, they will lead the change and it is incumbent on adults to help equip them with the skills, resources and opportunities to do so.

“This year, we were delighted to mark the first ever thematic day for children at COP, and we welcome a stronger role for a Youth Climate Champion, to engage children directly in climate action and the COP process. Giving young people a platform to have their say, is the right thing to do. But it is not enough. If adults stop at ‘passing the mic’ they risk also ‘passing the buck’. It is now time for world leaders to take seriously their responsibilities not only to listen to young people, but to act to protect vulnerable children facing climate chaos, especially the under 10s.

“Over the next 2 years, Governments must prepare and present new national climate action plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). We urge world leaders to seize this window of opportunity, and work towards

making COP30 a children’s COP – where we secure the 1.5 degree temperature limit that the next generation needs, and where all climate mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage and finance plans have children at their heart”.

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UNODC

PRESS RELEASE

Awareness Workshop on Drug Use and HIV With Health Journalists

14 December 2023, Lahore - The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Islamabad organized an ‘Awareness Workshop on Drug Use and HIV’ on 14 December 2023 in collaboration with Ministry of Narcotics Control (MONC), UNODC, UNDP, UNAIDS and WHO in Lahore. Purpose of this workshop was to create awareness among health journalists on drug abuse, HIV AIDS, HIV prevention among people who inject drugs (PWID), harm reduction and OAMT.

The one-day workshop was attended by representatives of key media houses and prominent health journalists. Dr. Farrukh Mehmood, UNODC welcomed all the participants and said that the workshop is being organized to create awareness on drug use and drug use related HIV, the various interventions/approaches for drug dependence treatment and prevention of HIV and blood borne infections transmission among PWID. Mr. Naeem Malik, Ministry of NHR&C presented a brief background of HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country and shared other dynamics of this deadly and silent disease. He said Government of Pakistan is committed to halt the disease and putting all resources with the support of provincial AIDS Control Programs as well as UN partners and Global Fund for fight AIDS TB and Malaria. He shared that over the last decade, the disease is concentrated in certain key populations like Injecting drug users, Male sex worker and Transgender. He added that the

epidemic in drug users in Pakistan is alarmingly high. He said this meeting is organized to share details of a newly initiative of OAMT which is related to address the issues related to drug users.

The participants were briefed that drug use has social and economic impact of drug use on families, society and country and the financial situation of the families of the drug users has an impact on family nutrition and education. The family of the drug user is socially isolated because of the stigma attached to drug use. Increased crime is also associated with drug use. There is high vulnerability of children to drug use due to presence of drug use in the family. Drug use increases the burden on health services, not only related to their drug treatment but also other health problems including Hepatitis B and C and HIV. As drug problem requires a comprehensive multisectoral response from various departments/sectors.

There is low level of awareness about harms associated with drug use and a serious need to raise awareness on drugs prevention including harms associated with drug use. Drug treatment services need to be strengthened both in terms of quality of drug treatment and coverage of treatment services. MONHSR&C, MONC and UNODC have developed 'Drug treatment protocols' and 'Drug treatment guidelines' for Pakistan. Several trainings based on the treatment guidelines were arranged for the treatment centres staff from the Government as well as private/NGO run drug treatment facilities. Risk behaviors (including sharing syringes and sexual risk behaviors) of drug users increase their vulnerability to HIV. High HIV prevalence in people who inject drugs (PWID) shows that a lot needs to be done which includes increasing coverage of services for PWID.

World Health Organization and UNODC, consider drug dependence a chronically relapsing health disorder which often co-occurs with other mental and physical conditions. Drug dependence is not a failure of will or strength of character but a medical condition that could affect anyone. Just like any other chronic health condition, such as hypertension or diabetes, the treatment of drug dependence requires a health-oriented response. Among pharmacological approaches, WHO and UNODC recommend countries to introduce and expand access to opioid agonist maintenance treatment (OAMT) for people with opioid dependence. OAMT involves use of a safe prescribed medicine, such as buprenorphine under medical supervision. The benefits of OAMT have been documented by the WHO, UNODC and UNAIDS, the main benefit being that the person who has been using illicit drugs no longer experiences severe withdrawal symptoms and therefore is able to stabilize his/her life. The injecting drug user stops injecting and sharing syringe which

prevents transmission of HIV, Hepatitis and other blood borne diseases. People suffering from dependence on opioids require long-term drug treatment, rehabilitation and care. Drug dependence treatment aims at improving the health and quality of people suffering from drug dependence managed by people who are professionals and who understand the basic underlying health condition.

For further information, please contact:-

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