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**NOTE EQUIVALENT TO AN
OPINION**

PREVENTION

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2002 JUNE 18TH

NOTE ÉQUIVALENT TO AN OPINION ON HIV/AIDS
PREVENTION IN FRANCE

For several years now, there have been growing signs of a resurgence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in France. This is part of a general context of normalisation of the epidemic. We are witnessing a decline in prevention in the entire French society.

Recent studies corroborate this : persons interviewed are not fully aware of transmission routes, their preventive behaviour is relaxing, and they declare a decreasing use of condoms.

Converging epidemiological indicators support the hypothesis of insufficient attention to infection risks.

Figures suggest that the resurgence of the epidemic concerns first and foremost certain categories of population (men who have sex with men, under-privileged populations, overseas departments' populations...).

For lack of tools on the dynamics of the epidemic, there is however no evidence that it is limited to specific groups ; the National AIDS Council can only deplore the far from perfect systems for the surveillance and analysis of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Established evolutions highlight a general phenomenon of unawareness of AIDS and denial of its epidemic dimension. It seems that this last aspect has no longer been receiving priority attention since the implementation of antiretroviral multitherapy ; for many people AIDS is now perceived as a chronic disease, "just like any other". And yet, while therapeutic progress has indeed enabled thousands of patients to survive, HIV infection remains a severe pathology, with many consequences and induces several hundred deaths each year. Moreover it remains a transmissible disease.

This is the context in which the National AIDS Council acknowledged the release by the Public Authorities, of "The HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategy in France for 2001-2004". The relative lack of interest of various Public Authorities, however, is perceptible. The difficulties met by prevention and care sectors, particularly the associations faced with serious problems, are symptomatic.

Consequently, the National AIDS Council issues the following recommendations:

1. All Public Authorities must urgently take steps to implement actions defined in their official programmes. Institutional mobilization means increased programme coordination as well as renewed support to prevention workers and their fieldwork.
2. The National AIDS Council considers that the epidemic character of HIV/AIDS infection and the need to develop shared responsibility towards oneself and towards others, must be emphasized. The Council advocates the immediate and repeated implementation of awareness and information campaigns for the general public. It also recommends that constant health education, sex education and prevention programmes be included in school curricula.
3. Such measures are on a par with a reaffirmed commitment of the Public Authorities towards those categories of persons most exposed to the epidemic and to discrimination (men who have sex with men, drug users, immigrants, sex workers...).
4. The National AIDS Council considers that the fight against HIV/AIDS within our borders also implies an increased effort in favour of access to treatment and care for the poorest countries.
5. Last, the National AIDS Council repeats its recommendations on the need for evaluation¹ processes enabling to measure the impact of AIDS prevention policies. Such processes must provide permanent indicators and prevention guidelines so as to adapt actions to actual needs.

¹ National AIDS Council, Evaluating public action for HIV/AIDS prevention : a need. Report and recommendations (January 22nd 1996).