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TAGS: TBIO, OTRA, US, FR

SUBJECT: PROPOSED FRENCH AIDS SUMMIT

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1. SUMMARY: ON FEBRUARY 7, PR. JEAN-FRANCOIS GIRARD, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH, AND OTHERS MET WITH SENIOR DHHS, AID, AND STATE DEPT. OFFICIALS AS WELL AS THE NATIONAL AIDS COORDINATOR TO SEEK U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSED AIDS SUMMIT ON JUNE 17. DR. GIRARD PRESENTED THE RATIONALE FOR THE EVENT, LIST OF COUNTRIES TO BE INVITED AND OUTLINED OVERALL PROCESS. NUMEROUS QUESTIONS WERE ASKED BY U.S. OFFICIALS, INCLUDING ADEQUACY OF TIME TO PREPARE, POTENTIAL CONFLICT WITH WHO EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH JOINTLY SPONSORED UN GLOBAL AIDS PROGRAM, RELATIONSHIP TO AIDS CONGRESS IN JAPAN, WHETHER IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO INCLUDE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BASED ON REGIONAL REPRESENTATION, AND THE BENEFITS THAT THE FRENCH EXPECTED TO ACCRUE FROM THE SUMMIT. DR. GIRARD DID NOT MAKE A COMPELLING CASE FOR THIS SUMMIT. DR. GIRARD WAS ADVISED THAT THE U.S. WOULD GET BACK TO HIM WITH OUR VIEWS. CONCERNED U.S. AGENCIES RECOGNIZE THAT THE SUMMIT COULD BE BENEFICIAL IF POSTPONED UNTIL LATE NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER TO ALLOW MORE REASONABLE TIME FOR PLANNING AND IF A REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE INCLUDED. AMBASSADOR IS REQUESTED TO MEET WITH SIMONE VAIL AND PRESENT U.S. POSITION BASED ON TALKING POINTS PROVIDED PARA . A SEPARATE MEETING WITH GIRARD BY OTHER EMBOFF WITH GIRARD IS SUGGESTED TO COVER SAME POINTS. END SUMMARY

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2. ON FEBRUARY 7, PR. JEAN FRANCOIS GIRARD, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH, ACCOMPANIED BY MR. CHRISTOPHE LECOURTIER, CONSEILLER TECHNIQUE, CABINET DU MINISTRE D'ETAT, MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES DE LA SANTE ET DE LA VILLE; AND DR. PASCAL CHEVIT, COUNSELOR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS, EMBASSY OF FRANCE, MET, IN SEPARATE AGENCY MEETINGS, WITH: (A) AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE DR. JON BORIGHT, OES; AT AID, MS. CAROL LANCASTER, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR AND DR. HELENE GAYLE, DIRECTOR, AIDS PROGRAM; AT DHHS, MS. PATSY FLEMING, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY, DR. PHILIP LEE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, DHHS; AT THE WHITE HOUSE, DR. CHRISTINE GEBBIE, NATIONAL AIDS COORDINATOR; AND SEPARATELY IN HHS WITH DR. DAVID SATCHER, DIRECTOR CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION AND DR. D.A. HENDERSON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND SCIENCE. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES POINTS DISCUSSED COLLECTIVELY IN THOSE MEETINGS.

3. DR. GIRARD OUTLINED THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED SUMMIT AS FOLLOWS:

--TO DEMONSTRATE STRONG POLITICAL INTENT AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT TO SEND A SIGNAL TO THOSE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS AND TO THOSE WHO ARE AFFLICTED WITH THE DISEASE THAT HIV/AIDS IS RECOGNIZED AS A MAJOR SOCIETAL PROBLEM AND THAT THE COUNTRIES ARE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH IT.

--IN LIGHT OF BUDGET CONSTRAINTS TO BRING ABOUT BETTER COORDINATION AND UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES, AND TO DETERMINE THE BEST ROLE FOR MEMBER STATES TO PLAY AS PART OF THE JOINTLY SPONSORED UN GLOBAL AIDS PROGRAM.

--TO FOCUS ON STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS TO FIGHT AIDS, TO LOOK AT WHAT THE PANDEMIC WILL BE IN TEN YEARS, AND TO ASSURE THAT WE ARE DOING THE BEST BOTH TECHNICALLY AND FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

4. A LIST OF SEVENTEEN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WHO WOULD BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE WAS PROVIDED BY DR. GIRARD AS WAS A SCHEMATIC OUTLINING THE PROCESS LEADING UP TO THE CONFERENCE. DR. GIRARD ADVISED THAT THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE ISSUANCE OF INVITATIONS BY THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER. THE INVITATION WOULD INCLUDE A DRAFT DECLARATION TO BE ISSUED FROM THE SUMMIT. THIS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A MEETING IN PARIS APRIL 7-8, INCLUDING BOTH DEVELOPED AND SELECTED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES PLUS SOME NGO'S. THIS MEETING WOULD FOCUS ON TECHNICAL ISSUES. THIS U.S. IS PLANNING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING, WITH REPRESENTATION COMING FROM DHHS AND AID.

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5. QUESTIONS/ISSUES RAISED INCLUDED:

--ADEQUACY OF TIME TO PREPARE. AT HHS MEETING, THE TIME REQUIRED TO PLAN FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT ON CHILDREN WAS NOTED. THIS WAS A PROCESS THAT OCCURRED OVER MORE THAN A YEAR. DR. GIRARD DID NOT APPEAR TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE TIME IS INADEQUATE, PERHAPS PROPELLED BY THE PRESS OF FRANCE'S DOMESTIC POLICY SITUATION.

--WHAT THE FRENCH EXPECT TO COME OUT OF THE PROCESS. DR. GIRARD EXPECTS THE MAIN OUTCOME TO BE A "SIGNAL" TO THOSE WHO ARE WORKING ON AIDS AND THOSE WHO ARE AFFLICTED THAT HERE IS HIGH LEVEL COMMITMENT AND THAT INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT AIDS WILL BE BETTER COORDINATED. CONCERNED U.S. AGENCIES BELIEVE THE OUTCOME MUST BE MORE CLEARLY DEFINED.

--WHETHER THE SUMMIT WOULD ADDRESS ISSUES (E.G. COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT AIDS) THAT SHOULD MORE APPROPRIATELY BE ADDRESSED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE JOINTLY SPONSORED GLOBAL PROGRAM ON AIDS FOR WHICH THE SECRETARIAT WILL BE LOCATED AT WHO. WE WANT TO ASSURE THAT THE SUMMIT WOULD NOT BE INADVERTENCE WEAKEN THE UN GPA BUT RATHER SERVE TO STRENGTHEN IT AND COUNTRY COMMITMENTS TO IT.

--WHETHER THE SUMMIT MIGHT DETRACT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON AIDS TO BE HELD IN YOKOHAMA, JAPAN. DR. GIRARD INDICATED THAT THE SUMMIT COULD ENHANCE THE CONGRESS BY PROVIDING AN IMPORTANT SIGNAL OF HIGH LEVEL COMMITMENT TO THE SCIENTISTS AND OTHERS WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE YOKOHAMA MEETING. A SUMMIT AFTER THE YOKOHAMA MEETING COULD, POTENTIALLY, BE JUST AS EFFECTIVE.

--WHETHER IT MIGHT SEND THE WRONG SIGNAL IF ONLY THE SEVENTEEN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IDENTIFIED BY THE FRENCH WERE AT THE TABLE. HHS OFFICIALS NOTED THAT THIS MIGHT RESULT IN A POLITICAL LIABILITY AND THE SUMMIT, IF HELD, MIGHT PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO BRING IN SELECTED COUNTRIES, FROM EACH REGION, WHO HAVE A STAKE IN GLOBAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT AIDS. COUNTRIES MENTIONED INCLUDED INDIA, SENEGAL, AND THAILAND.

6. DR. GIRARD WAS ADVISED OF THE IMPORTANT COMMITMENT MADE DOMESTICALLY BY THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION. THIS INCLUDES: WITHIN THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH REFORM PROPOSAL, THERE IS ASSURANCE THAT ALL IN THE UNITED STATES WHO ARE OR MIGHT BE STRICKEN WITH AIDS WOULD HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE, AND THEY WOULD NOT LOSE THAT PROTECTION. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL AIDS COORDINATORS OFFICE, WHICH DR. CHRISTINE GEBBIE HEADS. THE BUDGETING OF AN

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UNPRECEDENTED AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR HIV/AIDS PROGRAMS, WITH THE ONLY OTHER PROGRAM HAVING A NEAR COMPARABLE INCREASE BEING CHILD IMMUNIZATION. THE AIDS EDUCATION FOR ALL FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, WHICH SENDS OUT A SIGNAL TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR ABOUT LEADERSHIP AT THE WHITE HOUSE. THE OPENNESS OF COMMUNICATIONS THAT HAS DEVELOPED, AND THE ENTIRE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE AS WELL AS POLICY AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL THAT HAS OCCURRED WERE NOTED.

7. DR. GIRARD WAS ADVISED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS WORKING WITH A BUDGET THAT CANNOT BE INCREASED. THE POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT SITUATION THAT THE HEAD OF THE U.S. DELEGATION MIGHT BE IN IF THE U.S. COULD NOT GO TO THE TABLE WITH AN INCREASED INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT FOR AIDS WAS RAISED.

8. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT THE SUMMIT COULD HAVE SOME POSITIVE BENEFITS, IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT ARRANGEMENTS, ARE NOT SUCH THAT PARTICIPATION BY THE PRESIDENT OR VICE PRESIDENT COULD BE RECOMMENDED. GIVEN THIS AND OTHER ISSUES RAISED ABOVE, DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE IT AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN WOULD MEET WITH SIMONE VAIL TO DISCUSS THE PLANS AND U.S. VIEWS WITH HER DRAWING ON THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS.

-- AGENCIES WERE PLEASED THAT DR. GIRARD VISITED THEM EARLIER THIS MONTH TO DISCUSS THE PLANS AND RATIONALE FOR THE FRENCH AIDS SUMMIT.

-- FRANCE IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR ITS LEADERSHIP IN PROPOSING THIS HIGH-LEVEL EVENT, WHICH, IF PROPERLY PREPARED FOR, COULD DO A GREAT DEAL TO MOBILIZE THE WORLD FURTHER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS.

-- WE HAVE SEVERAL CONCERNS AT THIS JUNCTURE, INCLUDING WANT APPEARS TO US TO BE TOO LITTLE TIME TO PREPARE IN A MANNER THAT SUCH A HIGH LEVEL EVENT WOULD DESERVE. IT APPEARS TO US THAT A POSTPONEMENT TO LATER THIS YEAR (AFTER THE U.S. ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER TO HELP ASSURE HIGH LEVEL U.S. PARTICIPATION) WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE. INDEED, THE SUMMIT COULD BENEFIT AND BUILD ON EVENTS THAT WILL OCCUR AT THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY AND IN GOVERNING BOARDS OF OTHER UN SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (UNICEF AND UNDP) ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JOINTLY SPONSORED UN GLOBAL PROGRAM ON AIDS, AN ACTION WHICH BOTH FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE SUPPORTED. ADDITIONALLY, THE YOKOHAMA AIDS CONGRESS MAY WELL BRING OUT KEY INFORMATION THAT SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON BY HEADS OF STATE.

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-- THE U.S. BELIEVES IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMIT, PERHAPS THROUGH SOME TYPE OF FORMULA TO ASSURE REGIONAL REPRESENTATION. NOT ONLY COULD THESE LEADERS CONTRIBUTE TO SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE THINKING BUT THE SUMMIT COULD INSPIRE THEM TO GREATER EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY IN THOSE COUNTRIES WHERE AIDS PROMISES TO BE A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO THE COUNTRY BY THE YEAR 2000, IF NOT SOONER. INDIA, WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, FALL INTO SUCH A GROUP. INCLUSION OF SOME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WOULD ALSO REDUCE THE POTENTIAL FOR CRITICISM THAT 17 DEVELOPED NATIONS MET TO DECIDE HOW THE REST OF THE WORLD SHOULD ADDRESS THE PROBLEM.

-- IF FRANCE, FOR DOMESTIC REASONS, BELIEVES IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HAVE A HIGH LEVEL MEETING BEFORE LATE 1994, A COMPROMISE WOULD BE FOR A MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETING TO BE HELD IN JULY AS A PRELUDE TO A HEADS-OF-STATE SUMMIT.

9. PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER FURTHER GUIDANCE IS NEEDED AND RESULTS OF DISCUSSION.