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PRESS RELEASE

DRUG ADDICTION

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**PRESS RELEASE EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE
VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE RISK
REDUCTION POLICY**

On the eve of the hearing by the Paris High Court of the "public nuisance" action filed by the OLIVE 18 voluntary association against the "Boutique" (storefront drop-in facility) of the CHARONNE association and the "Sleep-in" run by SOS DROGUE INTERNATIONAL, the National AIDS Council strongly reaffirms its commitment to reception facilities whose objective is to reduce risks of HIV and HCV infection among drug users.

Recent and still vulnerable as it is, the risk reduction policy is seriously threatened by legal proceedings against drug substitution programmes (cf. the criminal investigation of Dr Labarre) and against "front line" structures (displacement of the "Beaurepaire" storefront drop-in facility in Paris ; legal proceedings presently under way Montpellier). Despite this, the policy has the support of the majority of the participants involved in the provision of care and welfare to drug addicts. Furthermore it is included as a priority in the 1999/2001 three-year plan of the Inter-ministerial mission to combat drug use and addiction (MILDT), with the support of the Prime Minister.

In a Report and Opinion issued on July 8, 1993 on "HIV infection among drug users", the National AIDS Council expressed its warm approval for the creation of such facilities for the provision of reception and support services and emergency accommodation. The Council considers it both necessary and legitimate to locate them in the districts hardest hit by drug addiction, and to do so in the name of the following principles : the provision of a range of responses to match differing situations and categories of drug user ; the correspondence between the nature of the facilities concerned and the drug users leading the most socially marginal existences, who are enabled by them to begin to emerge from the shadows.

Without advancing any opinion on all the arguments of the parties involved, the National AIDS Council draws attention to the fact that the "Boutique" and the "Sleep-in" were sited in the 18th district at the request of the health and social services authority (DDASS), that they are currently involved in consultation and mediation with other neighbourhood associations, and that these facilities are all the more vulnerable because they are insufficiently numerous, especially in Paris.

Attaching particular importance to prior consultation with local residents, the National AIDS Council recognizes that the public nuisance factor underlying the legal action they have taken must be taken into consideration. But it also considers that the risk reduction policy must be assessed in the light of the importance of prevention in the area of drug addiction and the efforts to curb the further spread of the AIDS epidemic in French society.