



Press release

PAKISTANI ROCK STAR APPOINTED AS UNAIDS GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Geneva, 1 July 2005 – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), has appointed celebrated Pakistani musician Salman Ahmad as UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador.

The lead singer of one of south Asia's biggest rock bands, Pakistani group 'Junoon', has agreed to assist UNAIDS in its efforts to reverse the spread of HIV by raising awareness on key AIDS issues through his music and celebrity status.

"UNAIDS welcomes Salman Ahmad as Goodwill Ambassador. We are confident that the prestige, talent and presence that he will bring to the AIDS response will help the United Nations send a powerful message that will reach the hearts and minds of people – particularly young people – throughout the world," said UNAIDS Executive Director Dr Peter Piot.

One of Salman Ahmad's first efforts to raise awareness about poverty and HIV will be to take part in the London leg of the global music event 'LIVE 8' which will take place on Saturday 2 July. His band Junoon have been invited to perform alongside the world's top artists including U2, Sir Paul McCartney, Pink Floyd, Sting, Madonna and Coldplay in the 'LIVE 8 call for justice for Africa and the world's poor' ahead of the G8 summit four days later. The London concert is one of a series of simultaneous free concerts being performed around the world. Hundreds of thousands of people will attend the concerts and billions more are expected to tune-in to international broadcasts.

"We need to get the message out that poverty is major part of the spread of AIDS and we cannot turn our backs on this any longer," said Salman Ahmad. "It's a great honour for Junoon to be part of one giant global-jukebox for the eradication of poverty and music is the most powerful force for positive change," he said.

Junoon will be specially flown in from the United States where they are on a world tour, to perform at LIVE 8. Their latest album entitled 'INFINITI' includes a track based on a real life story of a young Pakistani mother living with HIV.

As UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador Ahmad intends to raise awareness on HIV and AIDS prevention and care with particular emphasis on women and girls' issues. He will advocate for the need to increase HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes in developing countries. This year he will work on an HIV music video to be aired on World AIDS Day. He is also involved in a project called 'Empower Peace' which will connect high school students in the USA with their counter parts in the Islamic world via a live video conference on 29 September 2005.

UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassadors represent the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which coordinates the HIV/AIDS work of UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. They raise the profile of HIV work and the fight against stigma and discrimination on HIV issues for every affected population around the world.

For more information, please contact Sophie Barton-Knott, UNAIDS, Geneva, (+41 22) 791 1697, email bartonknotts@unaids.org. For more information on UNAIDS, please visit www.unaids.org.