

MONGOLIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND UNAIDS JOIN FORCES TO TACKLE HIV IN UNIFORMED SERVICES

Ulanbaatar, 18 May 2004 – The Mongolian Minister of Defence, H.E. Mr. J. Gurragchaa, and the Minister of Justice and Home Affairs, H.E. Mr. Ts. Nyamdorj signed a partnership agreement today with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to tackle HIV in uniformed services.

The partnership commits the Mongolian government to carry out HIV prevention activities among the uniformed services, particularly targeting young recruits, and increase awareness about HIV/AIDS. Activities include incorporating HIV prevention education in the military's training curricula and the development of HIV/AIDS information and education materials specifically targeting the Mongolian armed forces.

“Mongolia is increasingly vulnerable to HIV given that it borders Russia and China, two countries experiencing fast-growing HIV epidemics,” said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. “Although Mongolia’s national HIV prevalence is less than 0.1%, low condom use and increasing commercial sex work are fuelling the epidemic in the country.”

The uniformed services, especially young men and women, are highly vulnerable to HIV because of their work environment, mobility, and age. Military personnel are two-to-five times more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections than the civilian population and, during conflict, this factor can increase significantly. However, they have a critical role to play in the fight against AIDS.

“For a country with low prevalence but high vulnerability it is vital to recognize the need to strengthen leadership for an effective response to AIDS at country level. Working with uniformed services contributes greatly to moving ahead the national response to HIV/AIDS,” stated Dr Ulf Kristoffersson, Director of the UNAIDS Office on AIDS, Security and Humanitarian Response, during the official signing ceremony.

Mongolia is now among a growing list of countries, including Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Mozambique, Peru and Uruguay, that is fully committed to tackling HIV among uniformed services. These initiatives reaffirm previous commitments stated in Security Council Resolution 1308, and in the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted by all UN member states at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001.

For further information, contact: Ms. Nana Taona Kuo, South East Asia & Pacific Focal Point for UNAIDS Office on AIDS Security and Humanitarian Response, Bangkok, (+ 66) (0) 2 288 1216, or Ider Dунгердорж, UNFPA STI/HIV/AIDS and LMIS Consultant, Ulanbaatar, (+97) 6-11-323365.