



Press release

OPEC FUND AND UNAIDS SIGN GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO FIGHT AIDS

Geneva, 7 May 2004 –The heads of the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) signed a Global Initiative on HIV/AIDS today to scale up the AIDS response in fourteen targeted countries in three regions. The initiative will receive a US\$4 million grant from the OPEC Fund and UNAIDS will match the amount through in kind contributions.

Over twenty years into the epidemic, AIDS continues to ravage developing countries, depriving them of the resources and capacities on which human security and development depend. “The evidence is undeniable,” said Mr. Suleiman Jasir Al-Herbish, Director-General of the OPEC Fund. “More resources need be raised by the international community to fight this disease and stop the erosion of progress made over several decades of development work,” he added.

“We strongly welcome the collaboration with the OPEC Fund announced today,” said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. “AIDS is one of the greatest challenges of our era. The ongoing commitment of the OPEC Fund will help us provide urgently needed assistance to scale up the AIDS response in the fourteen target countries.”

The two-year OPEC Fund/UNAIDS initiative will strengthen leadership and action in 14 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean¹. It will aim at mobilizing greater political commitment to scale up the fight against AIDS, focusing on, among other areas, women and HIV/AIDS, national capacities and leadership as well as partnership with public, private and civil society. Recognizing the fact that HIV/AIDS knows no borders, the initiative also expects to address sub-regional challenges that increase the risk of HIV, such as migration and regional conflict.

Overall, the two-year initiative is expected to reduce HIV transmission in the targeted countries; ensure greater access to HIV prevention, care and support services; mobilize greater leadership support; and strengthen national AIDS responses.

The OPEC Fund has been contributing to the global fight against AIDS over the past three years by working closely with several other institutions, including the World Health Organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. UNAIDS is the main advocate for global action on the epidemic. It brings together the efforts and resources of nine UN system

¹ The 14 countries are: Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Haiti, Jamaica, Jordan, Mali, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Tunisia. The regional interventions are expected to indirectly benefit another 19 countries.

organizations to prevent new HIV infections, care for those already infected, and mitigate the impact of the epidemic.

The Fund's HIV/AIDS Programme is financed under a *Special Grant Account for HIV/AIDS Operations* established in June 2001 by the Fund's policy-making Ministerial Council. The account was initially endowed with US\$15 million and was replenished in June 2003 with another US\$15 million.

Note to Editors:

Additional details on specific interventions planned under the Global Initiative on HIV/AIDS:

In Asia and the Pacific: strengthening of human and technical capacities needed to implement national AIDS strategies, empowering key stakeholders and local leaders.

In the Middle East and North Africa: promotion of critical country-level public, private and civil society partnership in scaling up HIV prevention activities.

In Latin American and the Caribbean: greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS to develop positive attitudes to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with HIV. In particular, the regional network of women living with HIV/AIDS will be strengthened.

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