



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

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Press release

UNAIDS PRAISES VIET NAM FOR ADOPTING NATIONAL AIDS STRATEGY

Hanoi, 18 October 2004 -- Dr Kathleen Cravero, Deputy Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), congratulated the Vietnamese government for adopting an evidence-based and progressive National Strategy on the Prevention of HIV/AIDS. "This is an excellent national strategy and stands as a model for other countries in the region and the world", she told Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Pham Gia Khiem during their meeting today.

Dr Cravero reaffirmed the commitment of the United Nations and the international community to support the development and implementation of national AIDS strategies. "By adopting the National AIDS Strategy, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai has underscored the urgent need to act now to contain the growing AIDS epidemic in Viet Nam," she said.

According to Viet Nam's Ministry of Health, an estimated 215,000 people were living with HIV by end 2003. This means that 1 in 75 households in Viet Nam already has a family member living with HIV. "This is a tragedy for Viet Nam, and for thousands of families across the country," said Dr Cravero.

Viet Nam is receiving increased funds for AIDS programmes from donors, including the US and European Union governments, the World Bank, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria. These funds will support the expansion of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for thousands of people living with HIV and their families. Dr Cravero urged the government and donors to increase AIDS funding to the Ministries of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), and Education and Training (MOET).

Stigma and discrimination against people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS is a growing problem in Viet Nam. "Viet Nam President Tran Duc Luong's recent visit with people living with HIV was an important step in fighting the stigma surrounding HIV," stated Dr Cravero.

An increasing number of reported HIV cases in Viet Nam are among women, who also bear the brunt of care and support for family members living with HIV. "Although Viet Nam's National AIDS Strategy addresses gender, we hope that ministries will take urgent action to address the needs of women," said Dr Cravero. "In Viet Nam, as in other countries, issues like domestic violence, lack of women's legal rights, and young women's limited access to HIV education and services are fuelling the epidemic."

During her five-day visit to Viet Nam, Dr Cravero met with Viet Nam's Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem, Health Minister Tran Thi Trung Chien, and Madame Ha Thi Khiet, Chairperson of the Viet Nam Women's Union. She also visited Haiphong, where she met with the provincial health authorities, groups undertaking HIV/AIDS activities, and drug and sex work rehabilitation centres.

Kathleen Cravero is the Deputy Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). She has over two decades of experience in international development, and has worked for four UN organizations: – the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and, at present, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Since March 2003, Ms Cravero has been leading the development of the **Global Coalition on Women and AIDS**, a broad-based network of partners and organizations working to mitigate the impact of AIDS in women and girls worldwide.

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