

Press release

MOZAMBIQUE MAKES ADVANCES IN FIGHT AGAINST AIDS, BUT SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES REMAIN

Maputo, Mozambique, 23 March 2005 – Leaders from Norway, UK, Sweden, UNAIDS and the World Bank today praised Mozambique's efforts to fight AIDS, but called for greater donor coordination and continued leadership from the government to strengthen the national AIDS response.

Ms. Hilde Johnson, Norwegian Minister of International Development; Mr. Gobind Nankani, Vice-President for Africa, World Bank; Mr Suma Chakrabarti, Permanent Secretary, Department for International Development (DFID); Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations; and, Ms. Ruth Jacoby, Director General for Development Cooperation at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke at a press conference today on their two-day mission to Mozambique. During their visit, they met with representatives of the government, civil society, UN and donor agencies to explore ways to improve donor harmonisation at all levels, and in particular in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

On the issue of broader harmonisation and alignment, the leaders commented that much has already been achieved in Mozambique on improving donor practice. There is now a broad consensus that Mozambique should be in charge of its own development and that the PARPA (Mozambique's plan for reducing poverty) should be the single framework for moving forward. But challenges still remain, including donor accountability.

Although Mozambique has the tenth highest HIV prevalence rate in the world with close to 15%, opportunities exist to lower the infection rate. Community-based projects offering HIV prevention and care services are already in place, but they need to be scaled up at the national level. The leaders noted that preventing new infections remains the most cost-effective means of curbing the epidemic. However, they emphasized that a comprehensive response is needed that also includes providing care and treatment to 1.4 million Mozambicans living with HIV and AIDS, and support to the 273,000 orphans who lost their parents because of AIDS.

As international funding for AIDS increases, the key challenge is ensuring that the money is spent effectively, targeting those most vulnerable to HIV as well as those living with and affected by AIDS. To make the money work, the leaders recommended stronger coordination efforts by government, donors and civil society to fight the epidemic. A first step is by strengthening the National AIDS Control Council with the appropriate resources and authority to enable it to more effectively lead the national AIDS response.

The leaders recommended that regular reviews of the National Strategic Plan be carried out to ensure that the response keeps pace with the evolving nature of the epidemic. This requires that Mozambique, with the support of the international community, strengthen its national monitoring and evaluation system to determine

what is working, and what needs to be strengthened in the AIDS response.

Note to the Editor:

The joint mission by the leaders of DFID, Norway, UNAIDS, the World Bank and Sweden, to Mozambique is the result of a meeting held in 2004, in which donors committed themselves to support countries to strengthen their national responses to the AIDS epidemic. This resulted in the adoption of the “Three Ones” principles that must be applied to strengthen national AIDS responses, led by the affected countries themselves. These are:

The “Thee Ones”:

- One agreed AIDS action framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners
- One national AIDS coordinating authority with a broad-based multisectoral mandate
- One agreed country level monitoring and evaluation system

The mission to Mozambique by the organizations is one of several country missions planned to take place during 2005, during which they will engage with countries on the strengthening of their national responses to the epidemic. They have already visited Kenya and Uganda in January.

The mission also took this opportunity of visiting Mozambique to focus particularly on the issues of harmonization and alignment in the context of the Paris Declaration on improving aid and also in the recommendations of the Commission for Africa Report. Much has been achieved in this area but much more needs to be done, especially in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

An estimated 1,400,000 people are currently living with HIV and AIDS in Mozambique, of which 57% are women. The gender disparity is even more striking within the 20-24 age group where women living with HIV outnumber men four to one.