



Press release

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, UNAIDS AND CIVIL SOCIETY JOIN FORCES TO FIGHT AIDS

Geneva/Barcelona, 29 November 2005 – A powerful new alliance of international organizations, local governments and the United Nations are joining forces on World AIDS Day, 1 December 2005, to encourage citizens worldwide to fight AIDS. A chain of simultaneous events in cities around the world will link these activities, ranging from media briefings to school and community initiatives.

"Immediate action starts closest to home, and for many people that home is the city or community in which they live," said Elisabeth Gateau, Secretary General of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the world's largest organization of local governments. "Cities are taking up this challenge and adding their own force to that of the national governments who have made promises about AIDS. We hope that their actions will be taken into account in policy-making at the national and global level."

Some 40 million people are living with HIV or AIDS, of whom 5 million were newly-infected in 2005. Most of these people live in the world's towns and cities, so local governments have a crucial role to play in reversing the AIDS epidemic. By pooling resources and expertise with two key AIDS organizations, the World AIDS Campaign (WAC) and UNAIDS, UCLG will enhance the ability of local governments to fight AIDS in towns and cities across the planet.

"Cities and towns are at the forefront of the response," said Marcel van Soest, Executive Director of the World AIDS Campaign. "If we can reach the cities, we will be able to reach the entire country. On World AIDS Day we will be highlighting the need for all citizens to make a personal commitment on the issue. It is only when we assume collective responsibility for fighting AIDS that we will succeed in turning the tide on this pandemic."

On World AIDS Day this year, citizens worldwide will be called upon to make this personal commitment by logging on to www.worldaidscampaign.org and posting their personal promise. Local government's involvement in the World AIDS Campaign sends a strong message to national governments that more must be done: "Stop AIDS. Make the Promise".

A range of awareness-raising initiatives are planned, including advertisements on public transport, billboards and in the media. City halls and local school boards will also be supporting schools which wish to give their students lessons and materials on HIV prevention on World AIDS Day.

"Every single person can make a difference in the fight against AIDS," said Achmat Dangor, Director of Advocacy, Communications and Leadership at UNAIDS. "We can win by working together - and that means everyone including local governments, community groups, schools and concerned citizens around the world."

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) brings together ten UN agencies in a common effort to fight AIDS epidemic. As the main advocate for global action against AIDS, UNAIDS leads, strengthens and supports an expanded response to the epidemic. It aims to prevent HIV transmission, provide care and support to those living with HIV, reduce the vulnerability of individuals and communities to AIDS, and alleviate the impact of the epidemic.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Founded in May 2004, *United Cities and Local Governments* (UCLG) is the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government. Based in Barcelona, UCLG is the largest local government organization in the world. Representing over half the world's population, the cities and association members of UCLG are present in over 120 UN Member States across seven world regions – Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, Middle East and West Asia, Latin America and North America. Over 1000 cities are direct members of United Cities and Local Governments, as well as 112 national associations which represent all the cities and local governments in a single country.

The World AIDS Campaign (WAC)

The World AIDS Campaign is made up of national, regional and other HIV campaigns from around the world committed to holding decision makers accountable for their promises on HIV and AIDS whether they are individual politicians or policy makers, part of a multi-lateral agency or part of civil society itself. The World AIDS Campaign's (WAC) main role used to be to raise awareness on particular themes in the AIDS epidemic, be it women, men, stigma or young people. WAC is now going beyond awareness campaigning. Its aim is to stimulate real action at the level of the general public both nationally and globally. The broad aim is to support and link social movements fighting AIDS around the world.

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