

UNAIDS WELCOMES CLINTON FOUNDATION'S MOVE TO CUT PRICES OF AIDS TESTS

Geneva, 15 January 2004 - The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) welcomes the agreement struck by the Clinton Foundation to significantly reduce the price of HIV/AIDS laboratory tests in Africa and the Caribbean, the regions worst-hit by the epidemic. A number of diagnostic companies, including, Bayer, Beckman Coulter, Inc., BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company), bioMérieux and Roche Diagnostics, have cut the costs of their tests by up to 80%, enabling more HIV- positive people to access life-prolonging treatment and care.

This is the first time an agreement has been reached with leading diagnostics companies and UNAIDS hopes that the kinds of price reductions secured in this agreement can be extended more to other heavily affected countries.

The agreement covers two HIV/AIDS laboratory tests: the cd4 test, which helps determine when ARVs should be used in people with AIDS; and the viral load test, which helps measure how effective ARVs are in suppressing the virus and can alert clinicians about the need to adjust dosages or change regimens.

Today's announcement marks another step in the global movement to accelerate access to HIV care and treatment, which is gaining ground through a series of bold initiatives, including that of the Clinton Foundation, the US Government's Emergency Plan for AIDS and the joint WHO/UNAIDS "3x5" strategy to get 3 million people in developing countries on antiretrovirals by 2005. To date, only 400,000 HIV-positive people in the developing world are receiving HIV treatment out of 6 million who need it.