

UNAIDS AND WHO SUPPORT EFFORTS OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S EMERGENCY PLAN FOR AIDS RELIEF AND THE GLOBAL FUND TO INCREASE ACCESS TO TREATMENT

Geneva, 1 December 2005 – The reports coming today from President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria provide encouraging news about the increasing numbers of people receiving essential AIDS treatment.

Together, these two programmes provide more than 60% of the total donor funding to the AIDS response in developing countries.

Seen by many as impossible just two years ago, the number of people with access to treatment now continues to increase steadily. This represents real progress for the hundreds of thousands of people who will be able to return to normal, productive lives – having been saved from what was once a death sentence. As the 2005 AIDS Epidemic Update released last week highlights, because of the treatment scale-up over the past two years between 250 000 and 350 000 deaths were averted this year. President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund, and countless partners worldwide have done a great deal to make this significant step forward possible.

However, despite this good news, major challenges lie ahead. As a global community, we must sustain quality care for those currently receiving it and pick up our pace for making this lifeline available to the millions still in need. More than five million people will die in the next one to two years if they do not receive antiretroviral therapy (ART).

In early 2006, UNAIDS and WHO will issue a detailed report giving the latest estimates of the total number of people in low- and middle-income countries on ART. This data is still being collected and will include those efforts supported by President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund.

Access to treatment does more than save the lives of those who receive it. It is also an effective opportunity to strengthen and expand prevention efforts, helping to stem the tide of new HIV infections. Without strong prevention programmes, we will never be able to provide good treatment to all of those who will need it.