

Press statement

WOMEN AT FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL AIDS FIGHT

Geneva, 8 March 2005 - On International Women's Day, we celebrate women – their strength, their capacity for caring and compassion and the range of achievements they have made in their public, professional, and private lives. It is also a day on which we reflect on some of the difficulties women face in their daily lives – even on Women's Day.

Today, all over the world, women who are infected with HIV are getting on with life. In some places they are able to live full and productive lives. In others, they desperately need support and counselling. Women who are sick with AIDS continue to suffer. Women looking after ill relatives continue to provide love and care – often with minimal resources. And today, as on every other day of the year, another 7,000 women will be infected by HIV.

Many of those women will be young. Many of them will be poor. Many lack the knowledge to prevent infection. And still more lack the power to put that knowledge into action. Many will be unable to get tested or seek advice, and only a very few will have the chance to access lifesaving treatment.

Nevertheless, despite these troubling trends, women are at the forefront of the global fight against AIDS. They are not victims, but resilient and resourceful leaders and catalysts of action – persevering against seemingly insurmountable odds. Women are the fabric of society – holding together the families and communities they live in.

Last year, UNAIDS launched the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. The Coalition brings together activists, civil society groups, networks of women living with HIV, government and UN agencies. It was born out of the recognition of the need for a worldwide effort to promote AIDS strategies and solutions that work for women and girls.

Today, in Washington, DC, the Global Coalition is wrapping up a multi-city Women and AIDS US Tour with a Congressional breakfast briefing on Capitol Hill joined by Ambassador Randall L. Tobias, US Global AIDS Coordinator, Senators Frist and Clinton, and many others.

The tour has brought together a group of inspiring women from around the world to remind us that this fight is not just about facts and figures but about faces and families – and to provide us with a “reality check” on what does and does not work for women.

For more information, please contact Sarah Russell, UNAIDS, Geneva, tel. +41 22 791 5412, russells@unaids.org. For more information on the tour, or to sign the statement of support for the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, please visit <http://womenandaids.unaids.org/tour>