

## Statement

### **UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa offers to work with Ugandan Government to ensure full human rights protection for the country's sexual minority groups**

**Lusaka, 1 October 2008** – Reports of increased intimidation and torture of people from Uganda's sexual minority communities must be addressed at the highest level, according to the United Nations Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, Ms Elizabeth Mataka.

Ms Mataka is requesting an unprecedented effort to ensure the safety and well-being of all Ugandan citizens regardless of their sexual preference or orientation.

"Recent allegations of inhumane treatment have created a climate of fear among some groups within Uganda," said Ms Mataka. "We need to work together to move swiftly to ensure the safety of all citizens, protect their dignity and reassure them that they can live without fear of discrimination or reprisal".

"In the 1990s Uganda led the world in HIV prevention and expanded its response through inclusive partnerships. More recently there is evidence that the epidemic is starting to resurge, demonstrating how complex the epidemic is. The need for partnerships that reach out to all communities is paramount," she said.

"We know from our work in the HIV and AIDS field that the virus thrives on stigma and discrimination. A failure to protect the most marginalized in society is a failure that can lead to repercussions for wider society.

"We commend Uganda for placing HIV prevention in the centre of its National Strategic Plan and offer continued UN support to secure appropriate partnerships to achieve the goals it sets out to achieve".

Ms Mataka concluded: "UNAIDS and UNDP in the East and Southern Africa region are planning a series of international consultations in the coming year to explore how countries can work with sexual minorities and I look forward to the active participation of Ugandan colleagues".

#### **Contact**

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