

Her Royal Highness The Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway

**Kyiv-Mohyla Academy**

**Tuesday 21 October 2008**

Speech delivered on behalf of Her Royal Highness  
by Dr Sigrun Mogedal, Ambassador for HIV/AIDS,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway.

Dear students,

I want to thank the president of the Academy as well as staff, students - and peer educators in particular - for taking the time for this meeting. As UNAIDS Special Representative I am happy to get an opportunity to discuss important aspects of the AIDS response in Ukraine - and the role of the student's community in prevention work.

Youth leadership is a key factor in the fight against AIDS. Some impressive people have been working with AIDS related issues since the HIV virus was discovered 25 years ago – like Dr Peter Piot. But unfortunately they don't last forever. We need youth to follow up and intensify the efforts to stop and reverse the spread of this virus. AIDS is one of the greatest human tragedies in modern times. And we are all affected – as members of a global community.

Fortunately, in my AIDS related work, I meet quite a few remarkable young people – who have the energy, the guts and stamina to address the sensitive issues – and put pressure on leaders and those in power. I am here today to join forces with Ukrainian youth in the fight against the epidemic. And I believe openness is vital to combat stigma.

HIV appears somewhat different in every region in the world. In every country we need to understand what causes transmission, what hinders effective treatment and what makes people and societies vulnerable. We must deal with forces that cause stigma and discrimination in our own environment. We are all part of the solution. Positive people can show us the way.

A university is a place to grow. A place to learn and explore. Knowledge is a key factor in reversing the spread of HIV. I believe that young Ukrainians are ready to respond and make these choices.

Our commitment should build on acknowledging that we are all vulnerable, but also that each one of us can make a difference.

Thank you