

## Press Release

### **UNAIDS Special Representative Rupert Everett visits Russia to raise AIDS awareness**

**Moscow 23 September 2007**, Rupert Everett, renowned film and theatre actor and Special Representative of UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is travelling in Russia from 23-26 September. Everett, known from several acclaimed films including “My Best Friend’s Wedding” and “Another Country” will visit specific AIDS and Tuberculosis (TB) projects in St. Petersburg and Moscow to learn about the AIDS and TB epidemics in Russia and in particular what is being done to reverse the spread of these epidemics.

Rupert Everett has for many years been active in AIDS response; but this is his first official trip with UNAIDS since appointed a Special Representative on World AIDS Day December 1st 2006. UNAIDS Regional Director, Bertil Lindblad and Programme Coordinator Lisa Carty will accompany Mr. Everett.

Everett has previously visited the region and has also spent longer periods in Russia, when filming his movies, “But this trip is special to me – I want to help UNAIDS raise awareness about how HIV affects the most vulnerable groups in our society. Often HIV is linked with other diseases such as TB and those affected are often discriminated against”, said Rupert Everett.

While in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Everett will meet with several institutions and organizations including networks of People Living with HIV and activist groups, and witness how effective prevention programmes are set up.

UNAIDS Regional Director, Mr Lindblad welcomes Mr Everett and underlines the importance of celebrity support in the AIDS response and in particular how Rupert's visit to Russia help focus on the problems in the region: “People in the public eye like Rupert Everett can inspire and motivate others to unite against AIDS”.

According to UNAIDS, the number of officially registered people living with HIV in Russia in May 2007 was approximately 386 000. However, it is widely believed that the actual number could be up to 1.1 million. Worldwide more than 39.5 million people are estimated to be living with HIV. In 2006, 2.9 million people died of AIDS.

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