

UNAIDS and the Global Fund meet with Chair of the African Union

Executive Directors discuss the Millennium Development Goals and human rights as they complete joint visit to Malawi

LILONGWE, Malawi, 25 May 2010—In a joint official visit to Malawi, the Executive Directors of UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria commended President Bingu wa Mutharika on Malawi's progress in the AIDS response and his leadership as Chairperson of the African Union on AIDS, health, food security and development.

"President Mutharika's vision for the African Union is essential to a sustainable response to AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals," said Mr. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS.

"As Chair of the African Union, President Mutharika can showcase Malawi's achievements in health," said Prof. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. "President Mutharika can be a strong voice for Africa as the international community focuses on achieving health-related and other Millennium Development Goals."

During their meeting with the President, the Executive Directors emphasized the pivotal role of African voices in advocating for strong leadership in the response to HIV and health. The Executive Directors also emphasized the link between sustaining progress in the AIDS response and ensuring a fully funded Global Fund.

Mr Sidibé and Prof. Kazatchkine also expressed their concern over the recent conviction of Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga, two men in Malawi who were sentenced to 14 years in prison with hard labour for "indecent practices between males" and "unnatural offenses." They discussed with President Mutharika the health, societal, cultural and human rights ramifications of this case, which has attracted international attention.

"Criminalizing sexual behaviour drives people who engage in same-sex relations underground and hampers HIV-related programmes aimed at addressing their needs," said Prof. Kazatchkine.

"Evidence from several countries in Africa shows a significant number of new HIV infections occurring among sex workers, people who use drugs and men who have sex with men. Opening a societal dialogue on these sensitive and critical issues is the only way to guarantee access to health services and restore dignity to all," said Mr Sidibé.

President Mutharika expressed his appreciation to Mr Sidibé and Prof. Kazatchkine for raising these issues. He said that he is confident the cultural, religious and legal dimensions of the debate generated around this case will lead to a positive outcome. He also recognized

the importance of good health and development and proposed to serve as a strong advocate for the replenishment of the Global Fund, and work towards an HIV-free generation in Africa.

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UNAIDS

Leveraging the AIDS response, UNAIDS works to build political action and to promote the rights all of people for better results for global health and development. Globally, it sets policy and is the source of HIV-related data. In countries, UNAIDS brings together the resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and 10 UN system organizations for coordinated and accountable efforts to unite the world against AIDS.

Information on the work of UNAIDS is available at www.unaids.org

The Global Fund

The Global Fund is a unique global public/private partnership dedicated to attracting and disbursing additional resources to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. This partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities represents a new approach to international health financing. The Global Fund works in close collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral organizations to supplement existing efforts dealing with the three diseases.

Since its creation in 2002, the Global Fund has become the dominant financier of programs to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, with approved funding of US\$ 19.2 billion for more than 600 programs in 144 countries. To date, programs supported by the Global Fund have saved 4.9 million lives through providing AIDS treatment for 2.5 million people, anti-tuberculosis treatment for 6 million people and the distribution of 104 million insecticide-treated bed nets for the prevention of malaria.

Information on the work of the Global Fund is available at www.theglobalfund.org