

UNAIDS and French Parliamentary Assembly join forces to strengthen HIV response

French parliamentarians commit to universal access to HIV services

DAKAR, 7 July 2010 – A memorandum of understanding was signed today by Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, and Yvon Vallières, President of the French Parliamentary Assembly (Assemblée parlementaire de la francophonie or APF), to strengthen the HIV response in francophone countries hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. The signing ceremony took place during the 36th session of the APF, which brings together 300 parliamentarians from francophone countries.

“By partnering with the APF we can engage parliamentarians in francophone countries in advocating for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support,” said Mr Sidibé.

One of the priorities of the partnership will be to mobilize parliamentarians, particularly in francophone Africa, to adopt legislation that allows all people, especially those at highest risk of HIV, to access HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to bear the brunt of the HIV epidemic. Of the 4.1 million people living with HIV in francophone countries, an estimated 3.2 million are in sub-Saharan Africa, according to UNAIDS. 2.7 million adults and children were newly infected with HIV worldwide in 2008, of which 340 000 were in francophone countries – the large majority (270 000) in sub-Saharan Africa.

As part of the partnership, UNAIDS and the APF will work closely with governments to ensure that they deliver on their commitments to strengthen the HIV response, and allocate the necessary funds for expanding HIV services. They will also tackle such issues as the lack of health care workers in developing countries, and access to affordable quality antiretroviral drugs.

The APF is comprised of parliamentarians from 77 parliaments or inter-parliamentary organizations spanning five continents. It aims to promote and defend democracy, the respect of human rights and preserve the French language and culture.

In December 2009, UNAIDS signed a partnership agreement with the International Organization of la Francophonie (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie or OIF), which is made up of 70 Member States. The APF is an affiliate of the OIF.

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UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. www.unaids.org

For more information on the **French Parliamentary Assembly (APF)**, visit www.apf.francophonie.org.