

Press statement

UNAIDS commends HIV scientists for Nobel Prize win

Geneva, 6 October 2008 – UNAIDS is pleased with the announcement by the Nobel Assembly at Karolinska Institutet to award the 2008 Nobel Prize in Medicine to French scientists Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier for their co-discovery of HIV.

UNAIDS commends the scientists for their decades of work in not only identifying HIV in 1981 but in continuing to spearhead research and advocacy around the virus that causes AIDS and how it is treated.

As highlighted by the Nobel Assembly in its communiqué on the announcement, their discovery of HIV “...was one prerequisite for the current understanding of the biology of the disease and its antiretroviral treatment”.

“I congratulate Dr Barré-Sinoussi and Dr Montagnier on receiving this prestigious award for it gives recognition to the magnitude of HIV and how the AIDS epidemic has shaped our world since its discovery,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Dr Peter Piot.

More than 33 million people are living with HIV worldwide. Some 25 million people have died of AIDS-related illnesses since its discovery.

Dr Barré-Sinoussi and Dr Montagnier share the 2008 Nobel Prize in Medicine with Harald zur Hausen, a German scientist who in the early 1970s discovered the virus that causes cervical cancer.

For more information on the Nobel Prize in Medicine, please access the award communiqué at: http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/2008/press.pdf

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UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS' Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org