

## Senators in Burundi uphold rights of men who have sex with men

**GENEVA 18 February 2009**—UNAIDS welcomes the Senate action in Burundi to reject a draft law that sought to criminalize homosexuality. Senators in Burundi overwhelmingly rejected an amendment of the penal code that included provisions for imprisonment of people who have sexual relationships with those of the same sex.

“By rejecting this amendment, Senators in Burundi have protected the human rights of their people,” said Mr Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “They have also set a standard for other lawmakers around the world to follow their example in stopping laws that block the AIDS response.”

Criminalization of adult sexual behaviour and violation of human rights of people living with HIV are hampering HIV responses across the world. Such measures have a negative impact on delivery of HIV prevention programmes and access to treatment by people living with HIV. Not only do they violate human rights of individuals, but further stigmatize these populations. Currently, 84 countries in the world have legislation that prohibits same sex behaviour.

In the 2006 United Nations *Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS*, governments committed to removing legal barriers and passing laws to protect vulnerable populations. Countries that have non-discrimination laws against men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and sex workers have provided better access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

**Contact:** Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | [bartonknotts@unaids.org](mailto:bartonknotts@unaids.org)

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](http://www.unaids.org)