

Statement by Mr Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, on occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, 17 May

GENEVA, 15 May 2009—Ahead of the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), being observed worldwide this Sunday, I urge all governments to take steps to eliminate stigma and discrimination faced by men who have sex with men, lesbians and transgender populations. They must also create social and legal environments that ensure respect for human rights and enable universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

The failure to respond effectively has allowed HIV to reach crisis levels in many communities of men who have sex with men and transgender people. Efforts to reverse this crisis must be evidence informed, grounded in human rights and underpinned by the decriminalization of homosexuality.

In the 2006 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, governments committed to removing legal barriers and passing laws to protect vulnerable populations. However, more than 80 countries still have legislation that prohibits same sex behaviour.

Today, more than ever, we must work together to end homophobia and ensure the barriers that stop access to HIV services are removed.

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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. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS website at www.unaids.org