

UNAIDS welcomes continued commitment of francophone parliamentarians to the AIDS response

Geneva, 10 July 2009 – The Assembly of parliamentarians of Francophone countries have adopted a resolution reaffirming their commitment to the AIDS response. The resolution, which was adopted during their annual assembly which was held from 3 to 6 July 2009 in Paris, gave a strong message that Francophone parliamentarians are continuing to put AIDS high on the agenda and push the response forward in their countries and beyond.

“I am encouraged to see this level of leadership from Francophone countries to the AIDS response,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “Francophone countries in Africa, South East Asia and the Caribbean bear a significant burden of the global AIDS epidemic and a strong response is needed to break the trajectory of the epidemic and start building a better future for people affected by HIV.”

The resolution outlines several recommendations including; strengthening HIV prevention efforts, particularly among groups at higher risk of HIV infection; rejecting punitive laws including the criminalisation of HIV transmission and laws which prevent marginalised groups from accessing health services; free access to antiretroviral drugs for all in need; full use of the TRIPS agreement on compulsory licensing; and ensuring that sufficient funds are made available to developing African and Asian nations to reinforce public health systems.

The resolution also highlights the need to coordinate efforts with organisations such as UNAIDS Secretariat and Cosponsors and the European parliament.

During the plenary session which took place prior to the signing of the resolution, Abdou Diouf, General Secretary of the International organisation of Francophonie and former President of Senegal, underlined the important role the parliamentarians have to play in removing the discriminative and punitive laws which are so detrimental to the AIDS response. He also reaffirmed his personal engagement in the AIDS response and praised the new leadership of UNAIDS for reinvigorating momentum around the AIDS response.

The resolution highlights several areas of concern including the large numbers of people living with HIV in francophone countries, the limited access to and high cost of antiretroviral treatment, and the need to protect human rights of vulnerable people and groups at higher risk of HIV infection.

The resolution also warns that without an effective response to poverty reduction the response to HIV would be weak and would not contribute significantly to sustainable development efforts.

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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 Web site at www.unaids.org