

## Press release

### **Actress Naomi Watts accepts appointment as UNAIDS Special Representative**

**New York, 15 May 2006** – Naomi Watts, the renowned actress and Oscar nominee, who has starred in such internationally-acclaimed films as King Kong, The Ring, 21 Grams, and Mulholland Drive, has accepted an appointment as a Special Representative for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). As UNAIDS Special Representative, Ms. Watts will use her talent and profile to raise AIDS awareness and give greater voice to the needs of people living with HIV worldwide.

“Today, I am very pleased to appoint Naomi Watts as UNAIDS Special Representative,” said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. “Through her determination to make a difference – I know that she will be a strong and eloquent advocate for an enhanced global AIDS response. I am also confident that the unique presence and passion that Ms. Watts brings to this issue will remind concerned citizens everywhere of the urgent need for serious and sustained action in the global fight against AIDS – and the vital role of the United Nations in this effort.”

Ms. Watts’ appointment as UNAIDS Special Representatives comes immediately on the heels of her UNAIDS-led, fact-finding mission to Zambia. During her week-long mission, Ms. Watts visited clinics, hospitals, homes, schools, and shelters in urban centres and rural villages, dialogued with networks of people living with HIV, non-governmental organizations, peer educators, community outreach workers, nurses, and support groups and met with The First Lady of Zambia, Maureen Mwanawasa.

“In Zambia, I saw first hand the devastating impact of AIDS on individuals, families, and communities,” Ms. Watts said. “I was both humbled and inspired by the strength and courage of the women, men and children I met, who are truly moving mountains to save lives. They are the real heroes in this fight. I only hope that, as a UNAIDS Special Representative, I can do my small part to raise AIDS awareness and to encourage greater international support for the vital work being done on the ground. I have seen that everyone of us can make a difference – and I am anxious to join UNAIDS in this effort.”

According to UNAIDS, nearly 40 million people are living with HIV worldwide. Young people, under the age of 25, make up about half of new HIV infections worldwide. Every minute a child dies of an AIDS-related illness and every minute a child becomes infected with HIV.

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