

Message of the Day
World AIDS Day 2009
“I am living my rights”

Dear colleagues,

The theme of this year’s World AIDS Day is “I am living my rights”. This strong message reminds us of the right to health, and human rights against stigmatization and discrimination.

UNODC helps people live their rights, particularly those who are marginalized and at risk like drug users, victims of human trafficking, and prisoners. This is part of our comprehensive assistance to countries that includes activities on treatment of drug dependence, prevention of drug use, improving criminal justice systems with a humane approach in prisons, and protecting the health of people vulnerable to human trafficking.

Our aim is universal access to prevention and treatment – both for HIV (as part of UNAIDS) and for drugs (together with the WHO). At the moment, we fall well short of that goal. While progress is being made in some parts of the world, there is disturbing evidence of new epidemics among drug users and in prison settings, particularly in Africa.

UNODC, together with other members of the UNAIDS family, is therefore redoubling its efforts to achieve universal access to HIV prevention and treatment through a new initiative called the UNAIDS Outcome Framework (2009-2011). It calls for joint action to reach the most vulnerable, and bold new measures to break through social, political and structural constraints that are limiting the effective prevention and treatment of HIV.

Using drugs can be dangerous, not only because of addiction, but also because of the spread of disease. While stressing the importance of abstinence and prevention, the UNAIDS Outcome Framework also tries to protect drug users from becoming infected with HIV by making comprehensive, evidence-informed and human rights based interventions accessible to all drug users who are at risk for HIV.

The bottom line is to avert HIV infections and related deaths, to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV, and to contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal, namely to halt and reverse the AIDS epidemic.

Therefore, on World AIDS Day 2009, UNODC stresses the importance that everyone – including those on the margins of society who are most at risk – should be able to live their rights.

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