

PRESS RELEASE

Zero Discrimination Day to be celebrated around the world

GENEVA, 26 February 2015—Discrimination continues to affect the lives of millions of people around the world. On 1 March, Zero Discrimination Day, people from all corners of the world will unite under the theme of *Open Up, Reach Out* in order to celebrate diversity and reject discrimination in all its forms.

The support garnered for Zero Discrimination Day has created a global movement of solidarity to end discrimination, which remains widespread. Millions of women and girls in every region of the world experience violence and abuse and are unable to exercise their rights or gain access to health-care services, education or employment. Discrimination at work, school and health-care and other settings reduces people's ability to participate fully and meaningfully in societies and provide and care for themselves and their families. Globally, there are almost 80 countries that still have laws criminalizing same-sex sexual relations. Some 38 countries, territories and areas impose some form of restriction on the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV. Furthermore, legal and social environments are still failing to address stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and those most vulnerable to HIV infection.

"Discrimination is a violation of human rights and must not go unchallenged," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "Everyone has the right to live with respect and dignity."

For this year's Zero Discrimination Day people have been invited to *Open Up, Reach Out*, using social media channels to tell the world what zero discrimination means to them. People have shared songs, poems, thoughts and activities inspired by the butterfly, the transformative symbol of the campaign. People are also calling on their governments to make greater efforts to realize and protect human rights and eliminate discrimination.

"Some of the world's most challenging problems can be solved simply by eliminating stigma and discrimination," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "As we collectively strive for a fairer world we can be encouraged by the enthusiasm for achieving zero discrimination."

Among celebrities supporting the campaign are UNAIDS International Goodwill Ambassador David Luiz, who posted a special message on standing up to racism, UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador Toumani Diabaté and his son, Sidiki Diabaté, as well as the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 Ambassador and Sri Lankan cricketing star, Kumar Sangakkara, whose message is being played on screens at venues hosting the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 in Australia and New Zealand. Governments, lawmakers and business leaders have also pledged their support to the campaign.

Events to mark Zero Discrimination Day include photo exhibitions in China, dancing in Gabon, concerts in Madagascar, a storytelling event for children in Mongolia and special film screenings

in Nepal. Seminars and workshops to discuss issues relating to stigma and discrimination will take place in more than 20 countries worldwide, from Colombia to Uzbekistan.

Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated on 1 March 2014.

More information is available at:

http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/campaigns/20150204_zerodiscrimination

<https://www.facebook.com/zerodiscrimination>

#zerodiscrimination

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.