

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Belarus confirms it applies no restrictions on entry, stay and residence for people living with HIV**

*Foreign nationals to have equal access to health care services, including to antiretroviral treatment*

**GENEVA, 9 April 2015**—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) welcomes confirmation by the Government of Belarus that it applies no restrictions on the entry, stay and residence for people living with HIV. In addition, Belarus provides foreign nationals equal access to health care services, including antiretroviral treatment for people living with HIV.

The announcement signals that the country aligns its HIV-related laws and policies regarding HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence with international public health and human rights standards. These include the 2011 UN General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, which specifically encourages Member States to remove any existing HIV-related travel restrictions.

“In Belarus and elsewhere freedom of movement is a right for everyone to enjoy, regardless of HIV status,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé. “I urge the remaining 37 countries, territories and areas that still apply such restrictions to take immediate steps to end punitive laws and practices, as critical measures to ending the AIDS epidemic.”

With this positive development in Belarus, only three countries in eastern Europe and central Asia still apply HIV-related travel restrictions.

There is no evidence that HIV-related travel restrictions protect public health or prevent HIV transmission. The latest scientific evidence indicates that people living with HIV who are accessing HIV treatment can achieve an undetectable viral load, which significantly reduces the risk of HIV transmission. These restrictions also have no economic justification, as people living with HIV can lead long and productive working lives.

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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 to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.