

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Victoria Beckham visits UNAIDS in Geneva to lend her support to the AIDS response ahead of World AIDS Day**

*UNAIDS International Goodwill Ambassador urges people to test for HIV and to seek treatment if necessary*

**GENEVA, 23 November 2018**—A little over one week before World AIDS Day, UNAIDS International Goodwill Ambassador Victoria Beckham has visited the organization's Geneva, Switzerland, headquarters to support calls for people to know their HIV status and to seek treatment for HIV if necessary.

"I am really happy to be in Geneva to support UNAIDS in the run-up to World AIDS Day," said Ms Beckham during her visit. "We need to make sure that people feel supported to take an HIV test by ending the stigma and discrimination still too often associated with the virus. Today, we have the medicines to keep people healthy and to stop the virus being transmitted. AIDS isn't over yet, but it can be."

UNAIDS estimates that there were around 36.9 million people living with HIV worldwide in 2017, with around 21.7 million people accessing life-saving medicines that keep people alive and well and stop the transmission of the virus. However, UNAIDS also estimates that around one in four people worldwide continue to be unaware that they are living with HIV.

During the visit, the UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé, met with Ms Beckham to thank her for her support and to discuss the latest developments in the AIDS response.

"We have made a lot of progress in expanding access to treatment, but the number of people who don't know their HIV status is still far too high," said Mr Sidibé. "We have to make sure that people have access to testing services and are provided with treatment immediately if they need it. We also have to make sure that people have access to the full range of HIV prevention options to bring down the number of new HIV infections."

Thanks to antiretroviral therapy, AIDS-related deaths have been reduced by more than 51% since the peak in 2004. In 2017, 940 000 people died from an AIDS-related illness worldwide, compared to 1.9 million in 2004. In 2017, however, there were 1.8 million new HIV infections.

In many regions of the world, women continue to be the worst affected by the epidemic and every week 6600 young women aged 15–24 years become infected with HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa, three in four new infections among adolescents aged 15–19 years are among girls, and young women aged 15–24 years are twice as likely to be living with HIV than men.

In other regions, the epidemic is concentrated among key populations, such as gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers, transgender people, people who inject drugs, prisoners and other incarcerated people and migrants.

It is estimated that around 35.4 million people worldwide have died from an AID-related illness since the start of the epidemic.

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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 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.