

## PRESS RELEASE

### **UNAIDS and IAEA forge a powerful partnership against the interlinked diseases of cervical cancer and HIV**

**GENEVA, 7 February 2020**—UNAIDS and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have joined forces to increase action against cervical cancer and HIV. In a memorandum of understanding signed following an event to mark World Cancer Day at the headquarters of IAEA in Vienna, Austria, the two organizations pledged to scale up and expand services for adolescent girls and women affected by the two diseases.

Cervical cancer and HIV are inextricably linked. Cervical cancer is the most common cancer among women living with HIV, who are up to five times more likely to develop the disease, and women infected with certain types of the human papillomavirus also face a double risk of acquiring HIV.

"How is it fair that 90% of girls in high-income countries have access to the human papillomavirus vaccine, yet in low- and middle-income countries just 10% have access?" said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Like HIV, cervical cancer is a disease of health, gender and socioeconomic inequalities for women and girls all over the world. Services must be expanded and integrated as an investment in the lives of women and girls and to uphold their right to health."

In 2018, around 311 000 women died of cervical cancer, 85% of whom were in low- and middle-income countries, where vaccination, screening and treatment programmes are limited. The high mortality rate from cervical cancer globally could be greatly reduced by stepping up action in those countries.

Around 70% of women who develop cervical cancer require radiotherapy to effectively treat the disease; however, IAEA estimates that one third of low- and middle-income countries do not offer adequate radiation medicine services to meet patient needs. In Africa, 28 countries do not have a single radiotherapy unit. Part of IAEA's work is to help countries in the use of nuclear and radiation medicine to treat cervical and other types of cancer.

"Cervical cancer is one of those cancers that are perfectly treatable and curable if you live in Vienna, Buenos Aires, Rome or Paris," said IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi. "If you happen to live in a country with limited access to radiotherapy that is something that can kill you." He added that the partnership with UNAIDS was very important to maximize efforts in the important mission to help countries tackle cancer.

As part of the new agreement, UNAIDS and IAEA will work together to support national strategies and programmes to develop integrated workplans for HIV and cervical cancer. In addition, they will mobilize resources to expand prevention, diagnosis and treatment services, train health professionals and raise awareness around the links between HIV and cervical cancer.

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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.