

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **UNAIDS in shock over tragic loss of life**

**MELBOURNE/GENEVA, 18 July 2014**—UNAIDS expresses deep sadness over the loss of life of the passengers and crew of flight MH17, which crashed over eastern Ukraine on Thursday, 17 July 2014.

While the full details are still unclear, it is believed that many of the passengers were on their way to participate in the International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia. It has been confirmed that the United Nations has lost a colleague from the World Health Organization.

It seems that some of the finest academics, health-care workers and activists in the AIDS response may have perished while travelling to take part in the international gathering of experts and advocates. Professor Joep Lange, the former President of the International AIDS Society, was among the victims. Professor Lange was a leading light in the field since the early days of HIV and worked unceasingly to widen access to antiretroviral medicines around the world.

“We are bracing ourselves to hear of the deaths of others who worked in the AIDS response as their names are officially released,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “The UNAIDS family is in deep shock. Our hearts go out to the families of all the victims of this tragic crash. The deaths of so many committed people working against HIV will be a great loss for the AIDS response.”

The UNAIDS family stands in solidarity with the families, friends and colleagues of all who have perished in this tragedy.

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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.