

Press statement

UNAIDS welcomes appointment of new Director General of the World Health Organization

Geneva, 9 November 2006 – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) welcomes the appointment of Dr Margaret Chan to the position of Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr Chan is a well-known public figure because of her record of leadership in fighting disease first in Hong Kong, and more recently at WHO. During her nine-year tenure as Director of Health, Dr Chan confronted the first human outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza in 1997 and successfully defeated Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Hong Kong in 2003. She also introduced primary health care 'from the diaper to the grave' with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention, self-care and healthy lifestyles. In 2003, she joined WHO and rose to the position of Representative of the Director-General for Pandemic Influenza as well as Assistant Director-General for Communicable Diseases.

“The World Health Organization is a vital institution for the AIDS response and a key partner for UNAIDS. I have been working with Dr Chan for over a decade and am confident that she will show exceptional leadership on AIDS as WHO’s new Director General. UNAIDS looks forward to the opportunity to strengthen our collaboration further,” said UNAIDS Executive Director, Dr Peter Piot.

The World Health Organization has been a UNAIDS Cosponsor since the establishment of UNAIDS in 1996. As the directing and coordinating authority on international health work, WHO takes the lead within the UN system in the global health sector response to HIV/AIDS. WHO’s department of HIV/AIDS provides evidence-based, technical support to WHO Member States to help them scale up treatment, care and prevention services as well as drugs and diagnostics supply to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable response to AIDS.

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