

PRESS RELEASE

UNAIDS urges Francophone countries to join forces against AIDS

GENEVA, 26 March 2012—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is calling for closer collaboration between Francophone countries in sharing innovation and expertise to strengthen the global AIDS response. Francophone countries and observers represent more than one-third of the United Nations Member States and account for a population of more than 890 million people.

Significant progress has been made across the Francophone world in recent years with new HIV infections down by 22% since 2001 and AIDS deaths down by almost 12% since the mid 2000's. In 2006, 380 000 people were receiving antiretroviral treatment in Francophone countries; in 2010 the number rose to more than 1.2 million.

“An enormous amount of expertise in responding effectively to HIV has been built up across the French speaking world,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS.

“Francophone countries must optimize the unique opportunity they have through a common language and shared values to end the AIDS epidemic.”

Despite widespread gains made, progress across Francophone countries remains uneven. In the Middle East and North Africa new HIV infections have been increasing since 2001, the only region which has seen increases outside of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. And in the majority of countries in West Africa, more than half of people in need of treatment still do not have access.

In addition, funding for HIV in francophone countries is of particular concern. An average of 70% of resources for HIV in the Francophone world, come from external donors. Amidst an economic downturn and declines in donor funding for the AIDS response it is essential that countries and partners explore new and innovative solutions to funding the response to HIV.

UNAIDS urges countries to apply the UNAIDS framework for AIDS investments which is focused on high-impact, evidence-based, high-value strategies. If implemented UNAIDS estimates that global resource needs for HIV would begin to decline from 2015.

UNAIDS' call for a scaling up of Francophone leadership on AIDS was made at the 6th Francophone Conference on HIV/AIDS, being held in Geneva from 25-28 March 2012. Around 50 Francophone countries were represented at the conference creating an important momentum around the Francophone response to HIV.

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UNAIDS

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.