

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **UNAIDS calls on Greece to protect sex workers and their clients through comprehensive and voluntary HIV programmes**

**GENEVA, 10 May 2012**—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) expresses its concern over recent actions by Greek authorities involving the arrest, detention, mandatory HIV testing, publication of photographs and personal details, and pressing of criminal charges against at least 12 sex workers. There is no evidence that punitive approaches to regulating sex work are effective in reducing HIV transmission among sex workers and their clients.

The initiation of criminal prosecution against sex workers living with HIV for intentional gross bodily harm raises concerns about the inappropriate application of criminal law, particularly in a context where clients have the social and economic power to insist upon condom use. In addition, publication of names, photographs and positive HIV status drive sex workers into hiding and reduces their trust in health care services.

UNAIDS is further concerned by a recent amendment to immigration legislation adopted in April 2012 that appears to provide for automatic detention of migrants and asylum-seekers who have an infectious disease, or belong to a group at high risk of infection, without consideration of whether they pose an actual risk. This includes sex workers, people who inject drugs and could be applied to people living with HIV.

To the degree the law assumes that people living with HIV, sex workers and people who use drugs pose a public health threat based only on their health and social status, it is overly broad and discriminatory, and represents an HIV-related restriction on entry, stay and residence.

UNAIDS urges the Greek authorities to review these laws and practices with a view to adopt evidence-based programmes and an enabling legal environment that supports all people—including sex workers and their clients, people who use drugs, migrants and asylum-seekers—to access voluntary and confidential HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services so that they can avoid HIV infection or live a healthier life if HIV-positive.

#### **Contact**

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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](http://unaids.org).