



PRESS RELEASE

General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and UNAIDS to work toward an accelerated HIV response in the Arab Region

GENEVA, 20 May 2013—The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 20 May marking a new commitment to the HIV response in the Arab Region.

Guided by the 2011 United Nations General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS and global and regional HIV related initiatives, the MoU promotes a set of practical and regionally owned solutions to expand HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. The agreement calls for the development of an Arab AIDS Strategy, mobilizing political leadership and enhancing accountability among the different stakeholders.

The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and UNAIDS will work with relevant Arab Ministerial Councils at the League such as Health, Interior, Justice, Media, Youth and Sports, and Social Affairs as well as the Arab Parliament.

“Signing a joint MoU between the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and UNAIDS is a major step forward in our response to HIV,” said Dr Faeqa Said AlSaleh, Assistant Secretary General and Head of the Social Affairs Sector at the League of Arab States. “Through this strategic partnership with UNAIDS the League will work for an AIDS-free generation in the Arab Region.”

The Arab Region has one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world. Between 2001 and 2011, the estimated number of people living with HIV in Arab countries increased from 170 000 to 230 000. The numbers of AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections have also increased significantly. Between 2001 and 2011, there was a 32% increase in AIDS-related deaths—from 12 000 to 16 000. Recent studies suggest that concentrated epidemics are emerging among key populations at higher risk of HIV infection in many countries. Since 2001, the number of people newly infected with HIV in Arab countries has increased by more than 47%—from 19 000 to 28 000.

“The Arab region is an inspiration to the world. We are seeing a younger generation find new avenues of influence and become agents of change,” said UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibe. “This agreement brings new momentum to the HIV response in the Arab Region and builds on a transformative leadership, new partnerships and innovative methods to scale up the HIV response.”

Currently undergoing the most profound wave of change in their modern history, people around the region have voiced demands for political and economic inclusion, increased opportunities and social mobility. A new relationship between state and society based on human rights, social justice, participation, and accountability is being forged. Within this dynamic movement, the MoU also calls for the meaningful involvement of civil society and people living with HIV as key players for accelerating HIV response in the region.

[END]

Contact

General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, Cairo | Hatem El Rouby | tel. +20 2 0100 166 6297 | healthhum@las.net

UNAIDS Cairo | Nagwa Hassaan | tel. +20 2 2276 5558 | hassaann@unaids.org

UNAIDS Geneva | Saya Oka | tel. +41 22 791 1552 | okas@unaids.org