

**PRESS RELEASE****UNAIDS and the Organization of American States join efforts to advance the response to HIV in the Americas**

**GENEVA/WASHINGTON, 10 January 2014**—UNAIDS and the Organization of American States (OAS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in efforts to advance the response to HIV among the OAS Member States.

Through the MoU, UNAIDS and the OAS will increase HIV outreach activities such as information and education campaigns, policy roundtables, forums, lectures and scholarships programmes aimed at reducing new HIV infections, expanding access to antiretroviral treatment and supporting people living with HIV. UNAIDS and the OAS will also foster collaboration with regional networks of HIV positive youth to strengthen HIV awareness and prevention education, enhance social protection for young people, counter gender-based violence and challenge harmful gender norms among young people.

“HIV is more than a disease. It is an issue of security, social justice and distribution of opportunities,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “We must leverage this partnership to ensure that no one is left behind in the response to HIV in the Americas and that people most affected by HIV have access to essential HIV prevention and treatment services.”

Key populations including men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who use drugs and transgender people remain most affected by HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although new infections have stabilised, they are still not declining. The existence and enforcement of punitive laws as well as widespread stigma and discrimination against men who have sex with men, transgender people and sex workers continue to marginalize people most in need and block access to lifesaving HIV services.

“We have managed to break the curve of growth of infection,” said Miguel Jose Insulza, OAS Secretary General. “We now need to address structural, cross-cutting issues, including gender-based violence.”

In June 2013 the OAS General Assembly passed the Resolution on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of People Vulnerable to, Living with, of Affected by HIV/AIDS in the Americas. The Resolution urges Member States to continue their efforts in support to laws and public policies to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people living with HIV, and to increase HIV prevention and treatment for pregnant women and mothers, including preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The Resolution also promotes greater involvement of people living with HIV in decision-making and in the drafting of policies and programmes in response to the epidemic.

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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.