

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **UNAIDS expresses deep concern over impact of Ugandan bill on the rights of gay men**

*If signed into law the controversial bill would toughen punishments against gay people in Uganda*

**GENEVA, 18 February 2014**—UNAIDS is deeply concerned about a bill in Uganda that would further toughen punishments against gay men.

The controversial bill, which was passed by the country's parliament in December 2013, calls for a 14-year jail term for a first conviction, and imprisonment for life for the offence of 'aggravated homosexuality'. The signing of the bill into law would have serious human rights implications.

"Uganda was the first country in Africa to break the conspiracy of silence on AIDS—and to give voice to the most marginalized—but now I am scared that this bill will take Uganda backwards, relinquishing its leadership role in the AIDS response," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "I strongly urge the Ugandan authorities to reject the bill and ensure the human rights and dignity of all people in Uganda."

The bill also has public health implications; studies show that when gay people face discrimination including abuse, incarceration and prosecution—they are less likely to seek HIV testing, prevention and treatment services.

In 2012, there were 1.5 million people living with HIV in Uganda and 140 000 new HIV infections. Globally gay men are around 13 times more likely to become infected with HIV than the general population, emphasizing the urgent need to ensure safe access to HIV prevention and treatment services for all people everywhere.

UNAIDS urges the government of Uganda, and all governments around the world, to protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people through repealing criminal laws against adult consensual same sex sexual conduct; implementing laws to protect people from violence and discrimination; promoting campaigns that address homophobia and transphobia; and ensuring access to health services including HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

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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.