



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

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Press statement

UNAIDS WELCOMES SOUTH AFRICA'S DECISION TO IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL ANTIRETROVIRAL TREATMENT PROGRAMME

Geneva, 19 November 2003 – UNAIDS welcomes the decision of the South African Government to provide antiretroviral treatment on a national scale to people living with HIV in the country. The new South African national initiative will make that country's fight against AIDS truly comprehensive, with treatment complementing prevention efforts. Its implementation will bring hope for millions of people living with HIV and their families.

“South Africa's bold move to ensure that millions of HIV-positive people have access to treatment should mobilize other African governments to make treatment a reality for those infected,” said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director.

South Africa's response to AIDS now enters a critical new phase – one that is characterized by strong political commitment, a dynamic grass-roots movement, more funding, and scaling up of prevention and treatment programmes.

South Africa's treatment initiative is part of a growing global movement now underway to dramatically scale up access to HIV treatment, which includes the new United States Government's global AIDS initiative, the Clinton Foundation's recent agreement with generic pharmaceutical companies, the “3x5” initiative launched by WHO and UNAIDS, and the work of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

The United Nations system stands ready to provide support to the Government of South Africa as it implements this initiative.

Over 5 million people are living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa, the largest number in the world.

For more information, please contact Dominique De Santis, UNAIDS, Geneva, (+41 22) 791 4509 or Gavin Hart, UNAIDS, New York, (+1 212) 584 5016. You may also visit our website, www.unaids.org, for more information about the programme.

