

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS congratulates the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2018

GENEVA/ISLAMABAD, 11 May 2018—UNAIDS congratulates the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2018. The bill is transformational for transgender people who, in the past, either had to live with formal identification papers which did not accurately reflect their gender or go without identity papers. The change in the law will enable transgender people to apply for a driver's license and passport. They will also be able to apply to the National Database and Registration Authority to have their records changed to reflect their gender.

Transgender people frequently face discrimination when they are required to use identity documents, such as driver's license and passport, that do not match their gender identity or gender expression. Transgender people have been denied access to services or support, for example in health care settings, because they do not have official identity documents that recognize their gender identity or gender expression.

The new bill is very important for transgender people because it gives them legal protection. The groundbreaking changes provide access to rights previously denied to transgender people. They will now be entitled to inherit property, have the right to vote in all national, provincial and local government elections and to run for public office. All without fear of discrimination. The bill also allows for measures that are designed to meet the specific needs of transgender people. This includes the establishment of protection centres and safe houses and special vocational training programmes.

"This bill provides an enabling environment for transgender people to access health care, social justice, equality and dignity in society while enjoying productive lives," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "This is a positive move that will support Pakistan in achieving the end of AIDS as a public health threat by 2030."

Transgender people have a HIV prevalence rate 7.1 percent in Pakistan. Fifty-two percent of transgender people report facing stigma and discrimination. The figure increases to 55.8 percent for transgender sex workers.

The bill prohibits harassment of transgender people in the home and in public. It is now against the law for employers, educational institutions, health services, traders, public transport and property owners or sellers to discriminate transgender people in anyway.

"The passing of this bill is a dream come true for many transgender people," said Bubbly Malik, Executive Director of the Wajood Society. "We have come a long way and fought hard to get this. We will not stop now. This is the first step towards empowerment. We will be there to see

its effective implementation. The bill addresses health, employment and educational services which makes me happy.”

In June 2016, Member States of the United Nations committed in the Political Declaration on Ending AIDS to “promoting laws and policies that ensure the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for children, adolescents and young people, particularly those living with, at risk of and affected by HIV, so as to eliminate the stigma and discrimination that they face.”

UNAIDS urges all governments to fully implement the human rights of people living and affected by HIV, including by providing strong legal protections and implementing programmes to end discrimination and advance access to justice.

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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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.