

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Message from UNAIDS Executive Director following a meeting with civil society leaders in South Africa**

**GENEVA, 10 May 2018—** During my recent visit to South Africa, I listened carefully to you, I heard you. The HIV epidemic is inextricably linked to sexual and gender-based violence and the two can never be separated. We need the passion of advocates to move issues forward.

Let us come together and address sexual harassment and gender inequality. A transformative agenda to address sexual harassment and gender inequality is urgent. Let us work together towards it, let us spend our time and energy on this important agenda.

Speaking truth to power is at the core of civil society existence, therefore civil society should never feel threatened to silence because of fear of loss of resources (financial and otherwise). You are an autonomous and critical contributor to the AIDS response, we must preserve that always. Women and men at UNAIDS, in all their diversity, appreciate the support of civil society for standing together with them in solidarity, and in support of women's equality and rights.

Let us unite the HIV movement around these issues. Working together, we can define a vibrant movement that addresses the intersections between HIV, sexual harassment and gender inequality. In collaboration with you, I am calling for a women's meeting in Africa to forge the way forward on ending sexual harassment.

I heard you. I listened to all of you. I will act.

Michel Sidibé  
Executive Director of UNAIDS  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

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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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube.