

## PRESS RELEASE

### **UNAIDS puts forward a transformative agenda to create a model working environment at UNAIDS**

*UNAIDS outlines five key components for action that build on recommendations made by an Independent Expert Panel*

**GENEVA, 7 December 2018**—UNAIDS is putting in place [an agenda for change to transform UNAIDS](#) into a model working environment for all staff that ensures safety and inclusivity and upholds the highest standards of accountability and integrity. The agenda underscores that harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at any level, will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will be held accountable for their actions.

The agenda is based on a survivor-centred approach to harassment and will ensure that all staff are trained, equipped and supported to call out incivility, sexism, intolerance and other undesirable and unacceptable behaviours. It will strengthen management systems to fit the demands of a decentralized organization and ensure that decision-making happens at the right levels, with full transparency and internal controls for compliance with policies and standards.

The agenda builds on a strong body of work already under way to create a model working environment and draws on recommendations made by an Independent Expert Panel. The Panel was called for by the Executive Director of UNAIDS in February 2018 to provide recommendations on how to further strengthen the implementation of UNAIDS' zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment.

The [Panel's recommendations](#) and the [UNAIDS Secretariat management response](#) and agenda for change will be presented to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board on the first day of its [43rd meeting](#), which will take place from 11 to 13 December 2018.

“Driven by the AIDS crisis, UNAIDS has been a model for harmonized, system-wide efforts in the United Nations. Today, inspired by the #MeToo movement, we aim to be a model workplace, for the United Nations system and beyond,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “Staff are our main asset and they must be able to perform their functions in a safe, enabling and nurturing environment. This transformation will ensure that we can attract the greatest talent and further empower our staff to deliver on our crucial mandate.”

The agenda for change focuses on five key action areas: a staff-centred approach, compliance and standards, leadership and governance, management and capacity. Each area outlines a set of actions the UNAIDS Secretariat will undertake.

In line with its staff-centred approach, the agenda for change will include active bystander training to ensure that everyone in UNAIDS feels equipped and supported to call out incivility, sexism, intolerance and other undesirable and unacceptable behaviours. It will also establish mechanisms for confidential referral to survivor-centred counselling, expand the cadres of Dignity at Work Advisers and provide skills-building for all staff on preventing and addressing harassment, ethics and integrity, knowing your rights at work, diversity and inclusion.

A key component is the recommendation by the Panel to establish an external and independent investigation, disciplinary and redressal system, and UNAIDS will work with stakeholders, including survivors and women's rights experts, to examine options to take this forward.

UNAIDS will be strengthening its senior management capacity by implementing a new process for the selection of UNAIDS Country Director positions, which it will look to expand to all other senior director-level appointments. This will ensure that UNAIDS' leaders have the right mix of skills and experience to manage staff as well as skills and experience in technical areas.

In addition, UNAIDS will be implementing a 360-degree feedback mechanism in management appraisals for director-level staff to assess competency in managing people and resources and to detect signals of mismanagement and unacceptable behaviours.

To continue to show greater transparency, UNAIDS will publish reports on disciplinary and accountability actions taken and will proactively refer cases of suspected sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and abuse of power.

UNAIDS will also continue to drive implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as well as the updated Gender Action Plan, to build on the significant achievements made in recent years and advance progress towards the new, far-reaching targets set by UNAIDS.

In its findings, the Panel made observations about the UNAIDS leadership and called for change. "I have taken on board the criticisms made by the Panel," said Mr Sidibé. "In proposing this agenda, I am confident that we can focus on moving forward. I will spend the next 12 months implementing this agenda for change and making the UNAIDS workplace one where everyone feels safe and included."

The report also highlights that the global AIDS response has witnessed major successes under the leadership of Mr Sidibé. His call for the elimination of new HIV infections among children galvanized action, and significant reductions in new HIV infections have been achieved in all parts of world. Eleven countries have already eliminated new HIV infections among children.

Similarly, during this period, the UNAIDS 90–90–90 targets have propelled a major movement for HIV treatment access. Today, more than 21.7 million people are accessing life-saving antiretroviral therapy, compared to just over 5 million at the end of 2008.

UNAIDS has actively supported civil society engagement, championed human rights, and advocated for the rights of sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender men and women, prisoners and migrants to access HIV services. The Executive Director has made the rights of women and girls a priority, including access to sexual and reproductive health services, eliminating gender-based violence and removing harmful gender norms.

Today there is greater freedom of movement for people living with HIV as UNAIDS has worked with countries to remove travel restrictions. HIV and health issues have been kept at the top of political agendas. UNAIDS pioneered the concept of global solidarity and shared responsibility, and today more than half of all resources invested in low- and middle-income countries come from domestic sources. UNAIDS' agenda for change will be critical in ensuring that UNAIDS staff can continue to contribute to these extraordinary results.

UNAIDS is resolute in its commitment to lead by example in eliminating all forms of harassment, bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS by creating a respectful, transparent and accountable environment that enables all staff to contribute their full potential to deliver for the people they serve.

*Report of the Independent Expert Panel on prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS Secretariat:*

<http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2018/report-iep>

*Transforming UNAIDS, an agenda for eliminating all forms of harassment and upholding dignity, accountability and well-being in the workplace. UNAIDS management response to the Independent Expert Panel report*

<http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2018/management-response-to-iep-report>

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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. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.