

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **UNAIDS calls on countries to remove discriminatory laws and enact laws that protect people from discrimination**

*Discriminatory laws drive key populations out of reach of critical health and social services*

**GENEVA, 16 May 2019**—Ahead of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), on 17 May, UNAIDS is calling on all countries to remove discriminatory laws against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

Stigma towards key populations—gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers, transgender people, people who inject drugs and prisoners and other incarcerated people—is reinforced by criminal laws. These in turn fuel violence, exploitation and a climate of fear, hindering efforts to make HIV services available to the people who need them.

“We all have a moral and legal obligation to remove discriminatory laws and enact laws that protect people from discrimination,” said Gunilla Carlsson, UNAIDS Executive Director, a.i. “To end the AIDS epidemic, people need to be protected from harm. We need justice and equality for all.”

More than 65 countries criminalize same-sex sexual relations, including at least eight that impose the death penalty. Globally, gay men and other men who have sex with men are around 28 times more likely to acquire HIV than the general population and are much less likely to access HIV services. In 2017, gay men and other men who have sex with men accounted for 18% of new HIV infections worldwide.

“It is critically important that we create a world where all people can access the health and social services they need without the threat of violence and discrimination. Universal health coverage means reaching all people—sexual and gender minorities have the same right to health as everyone else,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

Transgender people, who account for an estimated 0.1–1.1% of the global population, often face stigma, discrimination and social rejection in their homes and communities. Discrimination, violence and criminalization prevent transgender people from accessing the HIV services they need to stay healthy. It is estimated that transgender women are 13 times more likely to acquire HIV than other adults of reproductive age and that 16.5% of transgender women are living with HIV.

“Justice and protection for all are central to driving progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Enacting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies, repealing punitive laws and ensuring access to justice for all are critical to delivering on the commitment to leave no one behind,” said Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

UNAIDS joins with the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in calling for the decriminalization of LGBTI people and for LGBTI people to be protected from violence and discrimination and to have full access to health and other social services.

IDAHOT, a worldwide celebration of sexual and gender diversity, is commemorated annually on 17 May.

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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](https://unaids.org) and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#)