

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS congratulates newly elected Pope Francis

UNAIDS looks forward to continued partnership with the Catholic Church in responding to HIV

GENEVA, 14 March 2013—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) congratulates His Holiness Pope Francis on his election as the new Pope of the Catholic Church.

“I give my warm wishes to Pope Francis as he assumes the papacy. His unwavering commitment to serve people most in need is an inspiration to us all,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “I look forward to working with His Holiness so that the Catholic Church can advance the AIDS response and ensure the dignity of people most affected by HIV.”

UNAIDS works closely with faith based organisations including the Catholic Church, which provides support to millions of people living with HIV around the world. Statistics from the Vatican in 2012 indicate that Catholic Church-related organizations provide approximately a quarter of all HIV treatment, care, and support throughout the world and run more than 5000 hospitals, 18 000 dispensaries and 9000 orphanages, many involved in AIDS-related activities.

UNAIDS values its close working relationship with the Catholic Church and the Holy See, particularly on critical issues such as the elimination of new HIV infections in children and keeping their mothers alive, as well as increasing access to antiretroviral medication.

In 2009, UNAIDS established a strategic framework to strengthen partnerships between UNAIDS and faith based organisations. The framework outlines the need for global and national religious leaders to take supportive public action in the AIDS response.

“The aids response is not just about science, but also social transformation which cannot be achieved without engaging religious leaders and faith based organisations,” added Mr Sidibé.

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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 to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.