

### **UNAIDS APPLAUDS BRAZILIAN SAMBA SCHOOL'S FIRST HIV PREVENTION CAMPAIGN DURING RIO CARNIVAL**

**Rio de Janeiro, 19 February 2004** – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) applauds the first-ever HIV prevention campaign to be launched by a Brazilian samba school during Rio's world-renowned carnival, being held from 20 to 24 February.

Grande Rio, a samba school in Rio de Janeiro, has composed a song entitled, "let's wear condoms, my dear", for their street parade. The samba schools in Rio organize street parades during two days of the carnival each year.

"Grande Rio's decision to promote a safe sex message during the Rio carnival is a very bold move that must be applauded," said Dr Luiz Loures, UNAIDS Associate Director for Europe and the Americas. "Integrating HIV prevention messages into popular events, such as the carnival, is an effective way to educate young people about AIDS and ultimately prevent new HIV infections."

Grande Rio's song was inspired by Joazinho Trinta, a well-known personality in Brazil and an active member of the Rio carnival. The students who are to participate in the street parade are expected to wear costumes in the shape of condoms.

"The media is a powerful medium to raise awareness on AIDS during carnival time. Grande Rio's safe sex message will reach millions of people worldwide as the carnival is broadcast in 150 countries," said Joazinho Trinta.

Grande Rio's HIV prevention initiative is supported by Brazil's National AIDS Programme and Health Minister Humberto Costa. The programme will distribute AIDS information materials and condoms during the carnival and offer AIDS education to the samba school students after the carnival.

Over 600,000 adults and children are living with HIV/AIDS in Brazil. Although the country's HIV prevalence has remained below 1%, prevalence rates of 3-6% have been measured among women in Rio Grande do Sul, primarily due to unprotected sex and sharing of needles. "It is important to build on Brazil's success in containing the epidemic and encourage other countries to follow suit," said Dr Loures.