

## **UNAIDS welcomes creation of new women's super-agency**



16 September 2009 – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (**UNAIDS**) today welcomed the creation of a new single UN body to promote women's rights, noting that more than 60 per cent of people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are female, as are three out of four young people.

"This is a historic opportunity to advance the rights of women and girls," UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé said. "UNAIDS will work closely with the new agency to promote women's access to health and development."

Seeking to improve system-wide coherence, the General Assembly on Monday adopted a resolution to merge the UN Development Fund for Women (**UNIFEM**), the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (**UN-INSTRAW**) into a new consolidated body headed by an under-secretary-general.

"Gender inequalities, sexual abuse, violence, conflict and poverty often increase women's vulnerability to HIV," UNAIDS said in a statement, noting that in Asia nearly 50 million women are at risk of becoming infected with HIV from their intimate partners.

"Protecting women from becoming infected with HIV and treating women living with HIV can turn back the epidemic. Stopping women from becoming infected and increasing their access to treatment also directly contributes to reducing the number of children being born with HIV and becoming orphans," it added.

Working alongside the new agency, the UNAIDS Secretariat will support strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to deliver critical maternal and child health services to women and girls at grassroots level. It will also leverage the AIDS response as an opportunity to stop violence against women and girls in all settings.

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