

## Press release

### **Young people and leadership in AIDS at centre of Dr Piot and Princess Mathilde's ICASA activities**

**Dakar, 7 December 2008** – UNAIDS Executive Director Dr Peter Piot and UNAIDS and UNICEF Special Representative Princess Mathilde of Belgium ended their joint participation at the 15th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) yesterday after several days of interactions with leaders and young people involved in Africa's AIDS response.

On 5 December, Dr Piot and Princess Mathilde opened a session on youth leadership, which was moderated by UNAIDS Special Representative Gaetano Kagwa. During her opening remarks, Princess Mathilde shared her ideas on essential steps to address AIDS, stating that young people need to be more engaged and included in HIV programmes and services; youth should have platforms to be heard; and young people have to step forward and serve as role models and share knowledge about HIV. The Princess asked for more attention to be placed on girls and young women and called on boys to be more engaged in the AIDS response.

At an afternoon session titled "Intergenerational dialogue: Where are the young leaders in the African response to AIDS?" representatives from several African youth organizations discussed the absence of young leaders on AIDS issues but, at the same time, shared their optimism for the potential that exists to increase young people's participation.

On 6 December Dr Piot and Princess Mathilde visited three health facilities in the Senegalese capital to learn about local programmes that provide HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services, in particular for women, children and adolescents.

With support of the Belgian Government, UNICEF and the UNAIDS Regional Support Team for West and Central Africa, the UNAIDS Executive Director and the Belgian Princess met with staff and patients at the health centre Roi Baudouin, which is a main provider of gynaecology, obstetric, and paediatric services. It also provides antiretroviral treatment for more than 300 people living with HIV.

Later in the day they visited a youth counselling centre and then the Centre Régional du Recherche de Formation within the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Fann, where they were joined by Senegal's First Lady, Mrs Viviane Wade. Through its national, regional and international networks, the research centre exchanges information regarding HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Dr Piot, Princess Mathilde and Mrs Wade also walked through the centre's vegetable garden – a distinguishing feature of the facility – where fresh food is grown to help boost patients' nutritional needs.

At one of her engagements during ICASA, Princess Mathilde took the opportunity to pay tribute to the work of Dr Piot, who will leave UNAIDS at the end of 2008. She called him "a pioneer in the AIDS response" and a man who has never backed down from speaking on controversial issues, which she defined as a true sign of leadership. She congratulated Mr

Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS's current Deputy Executive Director, on the announcement he will be the next Executive Director of UNAIDS in 2009.

The Belgian Princess was appointed a UNAIDS and UNICEF Special Representative for children and AIDS in May 2005.

### **Note to media**

Copyrighted photographs of Dr Piot and Princess Mathilde's participation at ICASA are available for reproduction. Contact UNAIDS for more information.

### **UNAIDS**

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### **About UNAIDS**

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS' Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)