

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS welcomes the United Nations General Assembly decision to hold a high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS in 2021

GENEVA, 25 February 2021—UNAIDS welcomes the United Nations General Assembly decision for a high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS to take place between 8 and 10 June 2021. The high-level meeting will review the progress made in reducing the impact of HIV since the last United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS in 2016 and the General Assembly expects to adopt a new political declaration to guide the future direction of the response. The high-level meeting will take place as the world marks 40 years since the first case of AIDS was reported and 25 years of UNAIDS.

“World leaders must seize the opportunity offered by this new United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS to maintain their focus and commitment on ending AIDS as a public health threat as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” said Winnie Byanyima, UNAIDS Executive Director. “The AIDS epidemic is unfinished business and must be ended for everyone everywhere, including for young women and adolescent girls and for other groups of people disproportionately affected by HIV. The right to health belongs to all of us.”

Progress towards ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals has been highly uneven and the global goals for 2020 adopted in the 2016 United Nations Political Declaration on Ending AIDS were not met. Stigma and discrimination, the marginalization and criminalization of entire communities and a lack of access to health, education and other essential services continue to fuel the epidemic. Women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa and key populations (gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers,

transgender people, people who inject drugs and people in prison) and their partners globally continue to be disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic.

UNAIDS is currently developing a new global AIDS strategy for 2021–2026 through a process that is inclusive of all stakeholders in the AIDS response. The final draft strategy will be considered for adoption by the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board in March 2021. The new global AIDS strategy will include new targets to ensure that no one is left behind in ending AIDS, wherever they live and whoever they are. By achieving these targets, the number of people newly infected with HIV would fall to 370 000 by 2025, and the number of people dying from AIDS-related illnesses would be reduced to 250 000 in 2025.

Even the gains already made against HIV are threatened by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The high-level meeting creates an opportunity to ensure that the world bolsters the resiliency of the HIV response to date, commits to rapid recovery post-COVID-19 and applies the lessons learned from the colliding epidemics of HIV and COVID-19 to create more resilient societies and health systems that are ready to meet future health challenges.

“The AIDS response has taught us that global solidarity is critical to making sustained progress against the impact of health threats like COVID-19,” said Ms Byanyima. “There must be concerted international efforts to reduce inequalities between countries and within them to strengthen the world’s capacity to absorb and defeat future global health challenges that put lives and livelihoods at risk everywhere.”

UNAIDS expresses its appreciation for the hard work of the high-level meeting co-facilitators, the permanent missions to the United Nations of Australia and Namibia, in the adoption of the resolution as well as to the President of the General Assembly for leading the process.

Given the constraints imposed by measures taken to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not yet been decided if the high-level meeting will be in-person, virtual or a hybrid of the two. In line with the resolution, UNAIDS encourages the

highest level of participation of United Nations Member States and the inclusion of civil society organizations and people living with or at risk of HIV in delegations to the high-level meeting. UNAIDS also looks forward to the multistakeholder hearing as a key opportunity to hear the voices of people living with, at risk of and affected by HIV, including key populations.

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 and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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