

UN Secretary-General applauds the removal of entry restrictions based on HIV status by United States of America and Republic of Korea

UNAIDS calls for global freedom of movement for people living with HIV in 2010

GENEVA, WASHINGTON DC, 4 January 2010 – UNAIDS strongly welcomes the elimination of travel restrictions based on HIV status by the Republic of Korea, effective 1 January 2010. It also commends the United States for full implementation of the final rule that removes entry restrictions which means that travellers living with HIV can freely enter the United States of America as of today.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated President Lee Myung-bak on the Republic of Korea's decision. "I applaud President Lee for his country's leadership in ending restrictions towards people living with HIV that have no public health benefit," said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

"I repeat my call to all other countries with such discriminatory restrictions to take steps to remove them at the earliest."

The Secretary-General also congratulated President Barack Obama when the US policy change was announced in October 2009. Today's removal of HIV-related entry, stay and residence restrictions, or "travel ban" as it was known, in the United States overturns a policy that had been in place since 1987.

UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé also hailed the United States and the Republic of Korea for ending entry restrictions towards people living with HIV, calling the policy changes "a victory for human rights on two sides of the globe."

"I call for global freedom of movement for people living with HIV in 2010, the year when countries have committed to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support," said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé.

"Let no country obstruct someone because of their HIV status. Such discrimination has no place in today's highly mobile world," Mr Sidibé continued.

Some 57 countries, territories and areas have some form of HIV-specific restriction on entry, stay and residence that is based on HIV status. These include those that completely ban entry of HIV positive people for any reason or length of stay; and/or are applied to visa applications for very short stays (e.g. tourist visas); and/or are applied to visa applications for longer stays (visas for residency, immigration, asylum or resettlement, study, international employment, and consular service). Such restrictions, strongly opposed by UNAIDS, are discriminatory and do not protect public health.

END

Contact:

UNAIDS Secretariat Geneva – Edward Mishaud | Tel. +41 22 791 5587 | mishaude@unaids.org

UNAIDS Washington DC – Gregory Smiley | Tel. + 1 202 2237610 | smileyg@unaids.org

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. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org