

## PRESS STATEMENT

### International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia

*Message from UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé*

**GENEVA, 17 May 2014**—“To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

Nelson Mandela reminds us that the dignity of each of us can only thrive if we embrace the freedom of all.

We must respect everyone’s freedom to love who they want to and to express who they are. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people have shown immense courage and are sparking a social transformation.

Criminalization of LGBTI people puts entire communities at risk. It keeps those in need of prevention and treatment services out of reach of life-saving interventions.

It is outrageous that in 2014, when we have everything we need to defeat AIDS, we are still fighting prejudice, stigma, active discrimination and homophobic laws in 78 countries around the world.

Not just in the streets, but in courtrooms, classrooms and clinics.

Stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity drive new HIV infections.

We can only be free when we respect the freedom of our LGBTI brothers and sisters.

Let us walk the road to freedom together.

On this International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, I call on everyone to join the transformation to realize our vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

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#### 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 to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.