



**Ministry of Health
Government of Romania**



Press release

Scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes to slow the spread of HIV in South Eastern Europe

Regional consultation on scaling up towards universal access in South Eastern Europe, Bucharest, Romania, 8-9 March 2006

Bucharest, 8 March 2006 -- Representatives of countries in South Eastern Europe are meeting in Bucharest for a 2-day consultation to identify obstacles and practical solutions for scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support with the aim of coming as close as possible to universal access to treatment for all those who need it by 2010.

“Scaling up towards universal access is an opportunity not to be missed for countries in South Eastern Europe if we want to protect our people from being infected and avoid another human tragedy,” said the Romanian Minister of Health, Mr. Eugen Nicolaescu, in his opening statement.

Over 30,000 cases of HIV have been diagnosed in South Eastern Europe over the last 15 years. Recent studies are showing that high risk behavior among young people and among populations most likely to be exposed to HIV can fuel the epidemic to higher levels. HIV prevention, treatment, care and support are needed more than ever if the region is to prevent an expanding epidemic as seen in other parts of Eastern Europe.

The meeting, hosted by the Romanian Government and facilitated by UNAIDS, is one of seven regional consultations being held globally. It brings together more than 50 government officials and leaders from non governmental organizations, community-based groups and international partners from across the region. Discussions will focus on the common obstacles that countries in South Eastern Europe are confronted with in scaling up comprehensive AIDS services.

“We hope to come up with concrete solutions to overcome existing challenges,” said Ms Deborah Landey, UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, in her opening remarks. “By the end of the year, all countries in the region will have roadmaps that identify key barriers to scaling up and commit to specific practical actions to overcome them and monitor their progress through agreed targets and milestones,” she added.

Note to editors:

The regional consultation builds on a number of broadly inclusive national consultations in each of the participating countries, within existing national AIDS planning processes, for scaling up towards universal access. Scaling up towards universal is a midpoint to achieving the Millennium Development Goal to halt and begin to reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/ AIDS (UNAIDS) has been asked by the United Nations General Assembly in a resolution adopted on 23 December 2005 to assist in facilitating these inclusive country-driven processes.

The resolution also requests UNAIDS to submit an assessment of these processes, including an analysis of obstacles, for the consideration at the United Nations AIDS Review 2006 scheduled at the end of May to review progress made in the AIDS response since the 2001 UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

For more information, contact:

In Geneva: Yasmine Topor, tel. +41.22.791.35.01, topory@unaids.org

In Bucarest: