

## Press release

### **World renowned artist, author and activist Mary Fisher accepts appointment as UNAIDS Special Representative**

**Geneva, 18th May 2006** — Mary Davis Fisher, the artist, author and speaker who travels the world advocating for those who share her HIV-positive status, has accepted the appointment as Special Representative for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). As UNAIDS Special Representative, Ms. Fisher will continue to raise awareness on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, with an emphasis on women, children and the oppressed. Through her many contacts in U.S. political and humanitarian circles as well as media and the arts, Ms. Fisher will support the UNAIDS mission of empowering people – especially women and girls – to protect themselves and live full, productive lives.

“I am proud to appoint Ms. Fisher as UNAIDS Special Representative,” said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. “For more than a decade and a half, Mary has been an eloquent voice for compassion and for action. Through her speaking, her writing, her art, and her foundation, Mary has united people in a common cause and inspired countless others to enlist. I am confident that the warmth, talent and presence she brings will help UNAIDS send a powerful message that can open hearts, minds, and doors of opportunity throughout the world.”

Diagnosed HIV-positive in the summer of 1991, Mary Fisher went public seven months later. In August 1992 she delivered a landmark speech at the Republican National Convention, moving the audience in the hall and millions more around the globe with her call for compassion and action.

“UNAIDS has worked tirelessly to help every pilgrim on the road to AIDS – and we with AIDS, around the world, are in its debt,” Ms. Fisher said. “There is so much more to do – and thanks to medical miracles, there is so much more we can do, to prevent babies and young people from becoming HIV infected and to give HIV-positive people healthier, longer lives. As a UNAIDS Special Representative, I dedicate myself to the disenfranchised, especially women and girls -- and I call on the international community to join us in ensuring that they are protected and empowered.”

Ms. Fisher recently returned from a UNAIDS fact-finding trip to Zambia, where she focused on the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls.

In 1992 Ms. Fisher founded the Family AIDS Network (FAN), a group that advocated on behalf of families touched by AIDS. In 2000, convinced of the need to underpin advocacy

with research and education, Fisher closed FAN and founded The Mary Fisher CARE (Clinical AIDS Research and Education) Fund. Based at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the CARE Fund supports long-term, outcomes-based research for the care of people living with HIV, especially women, in both the United States and Africa.

Ms. Fisher is a member of the Leadership Council of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Her words, photographs and art works have filled five books; her art has been exhibited widely in the United States and around the world. A television producer and an assistant to the President of the United States before she gained international recognition as a chronicler of the global AIDS epidemic, she lives and works in West Palm Beach, Florida, US.

According to UNAIDS, nearly 40 million people are living with HIV worldwide. Young people, between the ages of 15 and 24, make up about half of new HIV infections worldwide. Every minute a child dies of an AIDS-related illness and every minute a child becomes infected with HIV.

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