

UNAIDS AND GERMAN DEVELOPMENT BANK SIGN KEY AGREEMENT TO TACKLE AIDS

Geneva, 22 July 2004- Efforts to combat HIV in Central America and the Caribbean received a major boost today. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the German Development Bank (KfW) signed a cooperation agreement to encourage HIV prevention and reduce infection in these severely affected regions. This signing strengthens the already extensive collaboration between UNAIDS and KfW on AIDS programming.

Under this agreement, the German government, through KfW will strengthen AIDS prevention efforts by promoting the availability of condoms at an affordable price, as well as educational and advertising campaigns for behaviour change. To that end, KfW has committed more than 13 million euros to support countries in Central America and the Caribbean. Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala will be the first countries to benefit from the 7.6 million euros to be made available in Central America. In the Caribbean, KfW funds amounting to 6 million euros will benefit social marketing campaigns in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guyana and possibly Cuba.

“It is vital to get a steady supply of good quality condoms and information to the people of Central America and the Caribbean,” said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, who signed today’s cooperation framework. “Such access is crucial for effective HIV prevention. We can really make a dramatic difference,” he added.

UNAIDS will play a role in providing strategic information and technical guidance for the regional initiatives and will facilitate coordination among various stakeholders. UNAIDS will chair a multi-partner Consultative Group in both Central America and the Caribbean which will harmonize efforts among the partners involved in the implementation of the prevention activities.

“Jointly with UNAIDS, the German Development Bank aims to overcome fragmentation and bureaucratic burden in the fight against HIV/AIDS without compromising on efficiency and impact.” said Dr. Hanns-Peter Neuhoff, Senior Vice President of KfW. He added: “With German government grants, we and our regional partners have been strongly supported by UNAIDS in developing coordination and monitoring mechanisms.”

Central America and the Caribbean have been hard hit by the AIDS epidemic. HIV prevalence in the Caribbean is second only to sub-Saharan Africa. In Haiti, for example, HIV prevalence rates are 5.6%, affecting mostly young people. In Central America the epidemic has been increasing steadily and many countries now face serious epidemics among the most vulnerable populations with HIV rates of more than 10% among sex workers and men who have sex with men in countries like Honduras.

Given the real added value that such strategic partnerships can bring to tackling HIV, both UNAIDS and the German Development Bank are exploring similar collaboration in future programmes to strengthen prevention in other highly affected regions, such as West and Central Africa.

For more information, please contact Nina Ferencic, UNAIDS, Geneva, +41 22 791 4812. You may also visit the UNAIDS website, www.unaids.org, for more information about the programme.