

**Statement by Kemal Derviş,
Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme
On the occasion of World AIDS Day
1 December 2007**

The World AIDS Campaign has selected “leadership” as the 2007 World AIDS Day theme highlighting the need for innovative and visionary leadership in response to the epidemic. It calls on all of us to renew our commitment at the individual, family, community, national and international level to support empowering leadership on AIDS.

New data released by UNAIDS in its 2007 AIDS Epidemic Update shows global HIV prevalence leveling off and the number of new infections falling, with approximately 33.2 million people living with HIV in 2007. Yet with 6,800 new infections and over 5,700 deaths each day due to AIDS, we recognize the epidemic as a long-term development crisis—as it claims lives, deepens and spreads poverty and depletes resources. We must continue to scale up efforts towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

As a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, UNDP is playing a leading role in the global response to AIDS and will continue to strengthen its efforts to address HIV/AIDS as it affects development, governance, the protection of human rights and gender equality. In doing so, we will support the wider UN system’s coordinated response to the epidemic.

On World AIDS Day, I am also pleased to launch a call for nominations for the biennial Red Ribbon Award to honour and celebrate the leadership of community organizations. For over 20 years, communities have been the hardest hit by AIDS, yet they have shown extraordinary courage and resilience and their leadership has been central to address the challenges posed by the epidemic.

HIV/AIDS has been a challenge for the world at large but also for UNDP staff and their families. As UNDP’s Administrator, I am proud of the commitment our organization has made to support staff living with HIV. We have been at the forefront of developing the Inter-Agency Programme “UN Cares” that will succeed our own “We Care” programme. This is a major step forward in ensuring that UNDP staff living with HIV/AIDS have access to care, treatment and support, and a workplace free from stigma and discrimination.

Voluntary counseling and testing will be included as part of the activities around World AIDS Day in New York. I would like to encourage all UNDP staff as well as their spouses/partners and children to take advantage of this opportunity.

Let us all pledge on this World AIDS Day to sustain our leadership on AIDS and keep our commitment to the 6th Millennium Development Goal, of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015.