

UNAIDS welcomes announcement to remove entry restrictions based on HIV status from US policy

Washington DC, 30 October, 2009 — UNAIDS welcomes President Obama’s announcement of the final rule removing entry restrictions based on HIV status from US policy. The removal of HIV-related travel restrictions in the US overturns a policy that had been in place since 1987. Such restrictions, strongly opposed by UNAIDS, are discriminatory and do not protect the public health.

“Today’s announcement reinforces the position of the US as a global leader in HIV policy and practice,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé. “This policy change is a significant step forward by the United States towards promoting human rights in the AIDS response.”

In an earlier rulemaking notice, the US government concluded, “Maintaining HIV infection on the list of excludable conditions for entry into the US would not result in significant public health benefits. Further, this approach is not in line with current international public health practice. This approach continues discriminatory practices and contributes towards the stigmatization of HIV-infected persons.”

The announcement came alongside President Obama’s signature of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009. The Ryan White Program is the largest program dedicated to providing life-saving and life-extending treatment and support services to people living with HIV in the United States.

Hundreds of thousands of people are alive today due to the Ryan White Program, which was originally authorized in 1990 and is the model for many HIV care delivery systems around the world.

UNAIDS recognizes the Ryan White program as an integral part of the global AIDS response and a gesture of the United States towards achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for people within the United States living with HIV.

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UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org