



## UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights

### Response to the Report of the Independent Expert Panel report

December 11, 2018

Over the course of this year, the UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights has engaged repeatedly with the senior management of UNAIDS, including the Executive Director, regarding the handling of an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment and assault by a former staff person and the creation of an Independent Expert Panel to review the matter and related concerns about harassment.

The Reference Group welcomes the release of the report the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) examining concerns regarding harassment, bullying and abuse of power at the UNAIDS Secretariat, and the UNAIDS Management Response to this Report, presented to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) at its meeting this week. The IEP Report contains strong, comprehensive and well-substantiated recommendations in the areas of governance, leadership, management, and policy and process, put forward to assist the UNAIDS Secretariat to respond effectively to harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of authority.

These recommendations are grounded in human rights principles of equality, inclusiveness, non-discrimination, transparency and access to justice—the very human rights principles on which UNAIDS was founded. As a joint, co-sponsored programme in the UN system, UNAIDS plays a key role in mobilizing global attention to the ongoing crisis of the HIV pandemic. We are at a critical time in the AIDS response. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights is essential to ensuring that we achieve the end of AIDS as a public health threat and that, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals, “no one is left behind.” The mobilization of the global response to HIV has also generated broader benefits for other global health and development challenges.

The international community must pay greater attention to the epidemic, and to the inequities and human rights abuses that continue to fuel it and to impede the response. A strong Joint Programme must be part of that response. Therefore, attention must now be given to ensuring that the very human rights principles on which UNAIDS was founded, and which ought to be central to its programming, are afforded the same value in the leadership, management and governance of UNAIDS.

The work of the IEP and its ensuing Report were guided by terms of reference approved by the PCB. We urge the PCB to give strong consideration to enabling the implementation of these recommendations as a matter of urgency to ensure that UNAIDS can play its critical role in the global response to HIV.