



July 11, 2019

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres
Secretary General of the United Nations

Dr. Natalia Kanem
Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
and Chair of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations of UNAIDS

Dear Mr. Secretary General and Dr. Kanem:

Re: Search for a new Executive Director for UNAIDS

We write on behalf of the UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights.

The Reference Group is a body of experts established in 2002 to provide advice to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) on all matters relating to HIV and human rights, in recognition of the reality that respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights is essential to an effective HIV response and is a cross-cutting issue of relevance to many different areas of the work of the Joint Programme. The membership of the Reference Group brings together people from the HIV and human rights community, including advocates, jurists, ethicists, people living with HIV, people working in the NGO and community sectors, people working in the government sector, people working with faith communities, and academics. The Reference Group speaks with an independent voice; its views do not necessarily reflect the views of the UNAIDS Secretariat or any of the UNAIDS Cosponsors.

As the Joint Programme's advisory group on human rights, the Reference Group wishes to take this opportunity to share with you some views regarding the search for the next Executive Director of UNAIDS.

Addressing human rights is an essential dimension of the response to HIV, globally and at country level. UN Member States themselves have repeatedly recognized this in their Political Declarations on the subject. UNAIDS has a key role to play in articulating a human rights-based approach to HIV and in defining what it means for policy and practice. The Reference Group was, therefore, pleased to see that the committee established by the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board to lead the search for a new Executive Director of UNAIDS explicitly included, among the competencies that should be demonstrated by candidates, "expertise and experience in promoting, and commitment to, public health, human rights, and gender equality," as well as "knowledge and appreciation of vulnerable groups and those affected by the HIV epidemic" and a "demonstrated commitment to promote involvement of people living with, or affected by HIV."

In particular, in our view, it is important that any new Executive Director of UNAIDS must demonstrate an understanding of, and a firm commitment to:

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- the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular Goal 3 relating to HIV, and particularly closely related goals on ending poverty (Goal 1) and inequalities (Goal 10), achieving gender equality (Goal 5), and access to justice (Goal 16);
- the application of the principles of universal human rights to the response to the HIV pandemic, in recognition of the fact that the infringement and denial of human rights drives the epidemic, and traditional public health responses, without attention to human rights, cannot successfully overcome the epidemic;
- the continuing rollout of HIV treatment to vulnerable populations, and ongoing close support and cooperation with the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, including to secure from the international community the financial commitments needed to realize equitable, non-discriminatory access to diagnostic tests, prevention measures and medications according to need, as part of a larger agenda for universal health coverage (UHC);
- defending and advancing the full realization of the human rights of populations and communities particularly affected by HIV and AIDS, including: people living with HIV; women; gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM); trans people; people who use drugs; sex workers; prisoners and other detainees; refugees, displaced persons and other migrants; young people; people with disabilities; and Indigenous communities;
- ending punitive laws and policies such as those that
 - target people living with HIV (e.g. HIV criminalization, travel and immigration restrictions, etc.);
 - deny or undermine the autonomy, health and rights of women and girls, including sexual health and rights (e.g. by restricting or criminalizing access to contraception, including abortion services);
 - deny or undermine the rights of key populations and communities (e.g. the infringement of sexual autonomy through the denial of comprehensive sexuality education, or the criminalization of gender expression, consensual sex work or sexual activity between those of legal age of the same sex; the criminalization, stigmatization and denial of health services to people who use drugs; the withholding of health services to people in prisons or other closed settings; the criminalization of people living with HIV; etc.);
- advancing the recommendations put forth by the Global Commission on HIV and the Law in its two reports to date (2012 and 2018), as well as the recommendations of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines (2016), the implementation of which is aimed at the realization of human rights;
- protecting the necessary civic space for civil society organizations responding to HIV, including those defending the rights of people living with HIV and other key populations and communities affected by HIV, to operate without unwarranted government restrictions or retaliation; and
- supporting enhanced financial commitment to civil society organizations responding to HIV and AIDS.

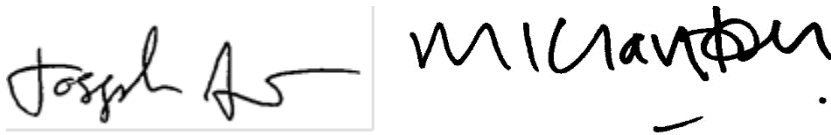
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In light of these and other human rights concerns, and in keeping with the criteria established by the UNAIDS PCB Search Committee, it is the view of the Reference Group that candidates being considered for the position of Executive Director of UNAIDS should be asked specifically to address matters related to human rights during the process of interview and selection.

To that end, we have prepared the enclosed open statement and set of key questions that we propose be explored with the shortlisted candidates, and that their responses be considered in the process of making a final recommendation and selection of the new Executive Director. (The statement and key questions are also posted on the Reference Group's website at www.hivhumanrights.org.)

We would, of course, be pleased to discuss the above with you at your convenience. We thank you for your consideration of the Reference Group's proposal, and remain,

Respectfully yours,

The image shows two handwritten signatures. The first signature, on the left, is enclosed in a thin black rectangular box and appears to be 'Joseph Amon'. The second signature, on the right, is 'Michaela Clayton' written in a cursive style.

Joseph Amon and Michaela Clayton
Co-chairs, UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights

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