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## **Meeting of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law: “Global leaders convene to address the legal dimensions of the HIV response”**

*Now is clearly the time to give attention to how to make laws impact positively in the era of HIV and AIDS. The lives of those living with and vulnerable to HIV are precious and must be protected in compassionate social environments.*

*Commissioner Miriam Were  
Global Commission on HIV and the Law*

**São Paulo, 7 October 2010** – Distinguished leaders and prominent public figures from diverse backgrounds and regions assembled this week in São Paulo, Brazil for the inaugural meeting of The Global Commission on HIV and the Law.

The Global Commission on HIV and the Law, launched in June 2010 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS, an independent commission – created to interrogate and analyse the key legal and human rights dimensions of the global HIV response. The Commission will clarify the ways in which the law and its enforcement shape and continue to influence the HIV epidemic and how legal protections can improve access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support.

Commissioners included former presidents and members of the judiciary. All 14 Commissioners participated in the first meeting, which was hosted by Former President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who is the Commission Chair. In addition to President Cardoso, members of the Commission include Justice Edwin Cameron (South Africa), Ms. Ana Helena Chacón-Echeverría (Costa Rica), Mr. Charles Chauvel (New Zealand), Dr. Shereen El Feki (Egypt), Ms. Bience Gawanas (Namibia), Dame Carol Kidu (Papua New Guinea), the Honourable Michael Kirby (Australia), the Honourable Barbara Lee (United States), Mr. Stephen Lewis (Canada), His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae (Botswana), Mr. JVR Prasada Rao (India), Professor Sylvia Tamale (Uganda), Mr. Jon Ungphakorn (Thailand) and Professor Miriam Were (Kenya).

The first meeting of Commissioners marked an important milestone for the process. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the priority HIV-related legal and human rights issues on which the Commission’s work will focus over the next 18 months. During her introductory remarks to Commissioners at the meeting, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark noted that “the HIV response is now at a crossroads. We are challenged with achieving more progress at a time of fiscal constraint in many countries, and in times of multiple crises. We should not therefore turn a blind eye to the moral, social, and legal complexities which continue to impede our efforts to halt and reverse the spread of HIV. The establishment of this Global Commission on HIV and the Law stands firmly in the center of this crossroads. It is an opportunity to improve the world’s response to HIV.” According to Ms. Clark, the Commission’s work can “help catalyze the next generation of the global HIV response - one in which equality, dignity, and justice are not the exclusive domain of a privileged few.”



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The message that the Commission presented an historic opportunity to shape the future of the HIV response was echoed by President Cardoso, the Commission’s Chair. Mr. Cardoso called for the Commission to engage actively with governments and with civil society in order to help countries to “make the paradigm shift required to build the decent societies needed for effective and humane HIV responses.”

The Commission’s Technical Advisory Group, comprising experts on law, public health and human rights, together with other invited experts, has been tasked by the Commission with preparing state-of-the-art research papers on a range of key legal issues arising in the context of HIV. This meeting also leads the way for Regional Dialogues, a key component of the Commission’s work, and opportunities for meaningful civil society engagement. At the end of 18 months, the Commission will issue recommendations along with a plan for action that will help countries develop HIV responses that empower the vulnerable and marginalized to seek and obtain HIV prevention and treatment, as well as to foster a social climate of safety and dignity for those affected by HIV. Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director has assured the Commission of the full support of UNAIDS.

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