



MORE COUNTRIES ACKNOWLEDGE THE NECESSITIES OF REMOVING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS BASED ON HIV STATUS

Dushanbe, 12 January 2010, - Starting from the first days of new year of 2010, the United States of America and Republic of Korea removed travel restrictions based on HIV status. It means that from now on travelers living with HIV can freely enter both countries.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé congratulated US President Barack Obama and Korean Republic's President Lee Myung-bak on their decisions and hailed their actions. UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé calls these actions "a victory for human rights on two sides of the globe".

"I repeat my call to all other countries with such discriminatory restrictions to take steps to remove them at the earliest," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in a statement.

"I call for global freedom of movement for people living with HIV in 2010, the year when countries have committed to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support," said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé.

Now around the globe, some 57 countries, territories and areas have some forms of HIV-specific restrictions on entry, stay and residence that are based on HIV status. Such restrictions, strongly opposed with expanding of the global response to HIV epidemic, are discriminatory and do not protect public health.

In 2008, Tajikistan also removed the article of deportation of foreign nationals living with HIV from new version of state law on HIV. However, foreign nationals, who are arriving in Tajikistan on job, study, permanent residence or with other purposes, for the period of more than three months, should pass the medical test within ten days from the date of their arrival, except those who have arrived with the certified test results of HIV/AIDS. Also individuals, whose petitions for the recognition refugee status have been registered, are subject to obligatory medical examination in accordance with the procedures established by the authorities of health care. At the same time, Tajik nationals, particularly working migrants encounter travel restrictions based on HIV status in receiving countries where these policies exist. Advocacy campaigns and actions are underway to remove other forms of stigma and discrimination towards PLHIV.

It is necessary to continue dialogue and advocacy at global level and between countries in the region to remove HIV related travel restrictions from countries' policies and support to minimize the stigmatization of PLHIV.

Travel restrictions have been imposed on people living with HIV since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This practice increased after a reliable HIV test became available in 1985. Due to high-level advocacy on implementing commitments at global level, world countries try to understand that HIV/AIDS should not be considered to be a condition that poses a threat to public health in relation to travel, although it is infectious, HIV cannot be transmitted by the mere presence of a person with HIV in a country or by casual contact (through the air, or from common vehicles such as food or water).

For preparation of this press release materials from UNAIDS web site www.unaids.org were used. Also UNAIDS Press Statement on this issue was published.

For more information, please contact Dr Maria Boltaeva – UNAIDS Country Officer in Tajikistan at: boltaevam@unaids.org