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UNICEF lauds move from confrontation to win-win response to HIV

Pretoria, 4 December 2006...UNICEF has lauded the Government of South Africa's accelerated effort to contain the impact of HIV and AIDS through action under a new National Strategic Plan, saying it will "move the country from a confrontational platform of reactive crisis management to a win-win platform of comprehensive response", to the epidemic.

"The promise of new partnership and new found respect between Government and civil society gives hope to all of us, not least the millions of poor and voiceless, including children, who all desperately need Government to accelerate prevention treatment and response," the children's organization said.

Speaking in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Theme Group on HIV and AIDS in South Africa, UNICEF Country Representative Macharia Kamau said South Africa had made great strides in the provision of treatment over the past two years and now has the fastest growing uptake and largest number of people on ARV treatment.

UNICEF called for a national plan where "the comprehensive response to the epidemic was based on maximizing political will, harnessing the energy of civil society, the technical bureaucracy of the Government and the genius and determination of the people of the country." The organization said it was ready to play its part in the process to develop and execute such a plan.

Redouble efforts to ensure child survival

UNICEF also urged the government to redouble efforts to ensure that prevention and treatment go hand in glove to secure children's survival for a better and brighter future. As long as prevention and treatment are outpaced by the rate of infection and deaths, the children of South Africa will have a dire future, it said.

The organization also warned that treatment for infants infected by their mothers continued to lag behind that of treatment for adults by an unacceptable margin and pointed to the horrific rate of deaths of parents, which continued to place more children into the desperate

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ranks of orphans”, but acknowledged that the country had made progress in providing treatment over the past two years to more than 300,000 adults through public and private facilities.

The UNICEF statement came following the launch of the Government’s new framework for a multi-sectoral National Strategic Plan to fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo Nqcuca in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga on 1 December, observed as World AIDS Day.

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