

31 July 2019 - In recent months, the role and legacy of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has been called into question. A leadership controversy, augmented by sexual harassment reports and rumors of plans to dismantle the agency, have hurt the institution and the global AIDS response.

The HIV epidemic is far from over and the relevance, leadership and guidance of UNAIDS is ever more critical. The International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO) and Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE) recognize that a strong and effective UNAIDS is needed to ensure that HIV continues to be a global development priority and that sufficient resources are allocated to end the epidemic.

As we move toward selecting a new UNAIDS Executive Director (ED), there are five characteristics that we think the next ED must possess.

FIRST, the next UNAIDS ED must **unequivocally put people living with HIV, key populations and other affected communities at the center of the response**. This cannot be rhetoric. The next ED must have a proven track record of knowledge, understanding and support for those that are being left behind.

SECOND, the next UNAIDS ED must **have a deep understanding and demonstrated expertise on HIV**. This understanding must be grounded in the latest science. The new ED must be able to maintain the credibility of UNAIDS as a source of reliable and relevant data, as well as technical guidance. Decisions about policies and programs must be guided by evidence, especially from the lived experience of communities.

THIRD, the next UNAIDS ED must **have an unwavering commitment to promoting and protecting human rights and gender equality**, particularly of marginalized and criminalized populations. The next ED must have exhibited the courage and strength needed to be a genuine human rights advocate and champion of gender equality.

FOURTH, the next UNAIDS ED must **understand the global dynamics of the epidemic as well as the specificities of local contexts**. The next ED must ensure that HIV is an integral part of the agenda for universal health coverage, while acknowledging that it still requires exceptional, or even emergency, responses in many parts of the world.

FINALLY, the next UNAIDS ED must **be an accountable leader**, both to the larger community and to their own staff. The next ED must be able to show that their past promises and commitments are matched with principle-centric action, full engagement and follow through.

ICASO and GATE remain committed to working with the Joint Programme, until we end AIDS.