





## The UN System Supports ICASA 2005 Leadership Forum

**Abuja, Nigeria, 17 October 2005** - In continued support for the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA), which will take place in Abuja December 2005, The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, underlines its commitment to the conference and the ICASA 2005 Leadership Forum.

The ICASA 2005 Leadership Forum is a two-day forum within the ICASA conference framework where leaders and stakeholders from all sectors will discuss the opportunities and challenges of scaling up an effective AIDS response in Africa, and develop strategies for real progress. This forum is a first for ICASA, which has established itself as the primary meeting place where people working with and affected by HIV/AIDS come together to discuss and articulate initiatives to confront the epidemic and other STIs in Africa.

The leadership forum will have plenary sessions, debates, special sessions, dialogues and special symposia on both days. Issues will include the politics and policies that affect the HIV epidemic and response in Africa, progress and latest developments, and the actions being taken to ensure accountability for international, regional and national declarations and commitments. The theme of ICASA 2005, African Family, Children and HIV/AIDS, is underscored in the second day's plenary which deals with the impact of HIV/AIDS on the African family, the challenges at different levels, and how to better empower and support and involve families in the response.

While spectacular progress has been made in terms of funding and investments in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the needs are still enormous and funding continues to be a challenge. Are the financial pledges and commitments being fulfilled? How effective have mobilization, coordination and use of resources and efforts by the global community, international donors and African governments been? The answers to these questions and more will be the topic for debate during "Hard Talk" on *Making the Money Work* with African and international leaders, on their commitments, actions, and how they can impact mitigation and influence future generations in the response to HIV/AIDS prevention, support and care. The session will be hosted by UNAIDS and the World Bank  is expected to involve a number of high-level participants including UNAIDS Executive Director  Peter Piot.

The special sessions will look at how AIDS could shape Africa's future, presenting three possible case studies to how the epidemic could evolve over the next 20 years based on policy decisions taken today by African leaders and the rest of the world; and will also focus on the socio-economic impact of AIDS, and successes and challenges of business coalitions.

Political leaders, partners and donors will dialogue with community leaders on how to reduce the economic, social, and demographic impact of AIDS on women; the underlying issues of poverty, and how economic empowerment can be mainstreamed in the response; and innovations in access to prevention, care and treatment.

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