

June 20, 2018

Ambassador Nikki R. Haley
Permanent Mission of the US to the UN
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Cc: U.S. Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo

Re: UNAIDS Scandal is Plaguing Its Mission

Dear Ambassador Haley,

The reputation and integrity of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) continues to be undermined by the ongoing scandal regarding the mishandling of sexual harassment and abuse allegations at the hands of its Executive Director, Michel Sidibé. We call on the United States, as the largest donor to UNAIDS, to urge the Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres to take immediate action by dismissing Mr. Sidibé and initiating comprehensive reforms at UNAIDS.

As you may know, there have been numerous articles published by CNN, The Guardian, The Lancet, Al Jazeera, The Independent, Daily Mail and others on how Mr. Sidibé mishandled sexual harassment allegations against his former deputy Luiz Loures by attempting to cover up the incident and interfering with its subsequent investigation. He attempted to influence Martina Brostrom, a UNAIDS staffer and the target of Dr. Loures's harassment, by offering her a promotion in exchange for dropping her case. Mr. Sidibé also threatened whistle-blowers during a UNAIDS staff meeting against coming forward with future claims of abuse.

Due to increased negative media attention, Mr. Sidibé has attempted to pressure civil society by collecting letters in support of himself, including from women's organizations. These actions are unacceptable for a UN program that claims its mandate is to protect the rights of women and girls as part of its global HIV/AIDS strategy.

The costly public relations campaign currently being mounted by Mr. Sidibé to preserve his position is yet another example of him putting his own self-interest before UNAIDS and its mission. Alarming, AIDS funding is decreasing worldwide, thus all available funds should go toward supporting public health programs, not propping up Mr. Sidibé's efforts to cling to his position for as long as he can. Unfortunately, so far no action has been taken by the Secretary-General and Mr. Sidibé has refused to resign.

Ambassador, as the US Permanent Representative to the UN you are in a unique position to take the lead on this issue on behalf of the American public and all those who want to see



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accountability and the equitable treatment of women at UNAIDS. As long as Mr. Sidibe remains in office, the credibility of UNAIDS will be tainted by his misconduct and the actions of those he tried to shield from responsibility for sexual harassment. When women staff members at UNAIDS are not empowered to report sexual abuse and are forced to see perpetrators go unpunished, the lack of equality erodes the vital trust and credibility that is indispensable to tackling HIV/AIDS in the world's most marginalized communities.

We hope that the United States will take a principled stand and demonstrate that Mr. Sidibé's behavior will not be tolerated. The credibility of UNAIDS will continue to be damaged and the crisis will continue to be a distraction in the global fight against AIDS until he steps down as Executive Director.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael Weinstein
AHF President