

June 7, 2018

His Excellency, Prime Minister Mark Rutte
The Kingdom of the Netherlands
Ministry of General Affairs
Binnenhof 19, The Hague

Cc: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok

Re: Integrity and Leadership Change at UNAIDS

Dear Prime Minister,

We call on the Netherlands, as the third largest donor to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) to urge the Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres to take action over the ongoing scandal at UNAIDS regarding the mishandling of sexual harassment and abuse allegations at the hands of its Executive Director, Michel Sidibé.

For over a decade, AIDS Healthcare Foundation's (AHF) global headquarters office has been based in Amsterdam. Today, AHF is the world's largest AIDS organization, which supports over 911,000 people with care and services and operates in 39 countries, including the Netherlands. To protect and restore the integrity of UNAIDS—an organization that is supposed to be a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS—we urge you to demand Michel Sidibé's resignation, in light of his unacceptable conduct.

As you may know, there have been numerous articles published by [The Guardian](#), [CNN](#), [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 also attempted to influence Martina Brostrom, a senior UNAIDS staffer and the target of Dr. Loures's harassment, with an offer of a promotion in exchange for dropping her case. In addition, Mr. Sidibé [threatened whistle-blowers](#) during a UNAIDS staff meeting against coming forward with future claims of abuse.

Following increased media attention on the UNAIDS scandal, Mr. Sidibé has attempted to put pressure on civil society by collecting letters in support of himself, including from women's organizations. Our own AHF leadership in China, India, Uganda and other countries has received numerous calls and pressure from the local UNAIDS offices and/or government on behalf of the UN regarding this matter. This is 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 mounted by Mr. Sidibé to manage the crisis has been allowed to go on for far too long. These funds should go toward supporting public health programs, not propping up Mr. Sidibé's futile efforts to cling to his office 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.

Prime Minister, your record is clear – you support equality for all. The Netherlands, as host country for the upcoming International AIDS Conference, is in a unique position to take the lead on this issue. There can be no equality within UNAIDS when its women staff members are not empowered to report sexual abuse and have to see perpetrators go unpunished.

We hope that you will take a principled stand and demonstrate that the Netherlands will not tolerate the abuse of power exhibited by Mr. Sidibé. The credibility of UNAIDS will be further damaged and the crisis will continue to be a distraction in the global fight against AIDS until Mr. Sidibé steps down as Executive Director.

Sincerely,

Ms. Zoya Shabarova
AHF Europe Bureau Chief

and

Mr. Michael Weinstein
AHF President