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UNAIDS and TEDDY Award partner to raise awareness on HIV for 23rd edition

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UNAIDS Executive Director Mr Michel Sidibé addressed the audience of the 23rd edition of the TEDDY Award in Berlin on 13 February. Credit: UNAIDS

UNAIDS Executive Director Mr Michel Sidibé addressed the audience of the 23rd edition of the TEDDY Award in Berlin on 13 February with a strong message: universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support must be accessible to all people who are in need—including men who have sex with men and other populations most-at-risk of HIV

infection.

UNAIDS partnered with the organizers of the TEDDY Award to focus this year's Teddy Topic on homophobia, human rights and AIDS.

The TEDDY Award is one of the longest running (since 1987) and most-respected international film awards for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. The award is part of the annual Berlin International Film Festival commonly known as the Berlinale, which ended on 15 February.

At the start of the evening ceremony, Mr Sidibé engaged in a lively conversation with Dirk Ludigs, a well-known German journalist and author, outlining the work of UNAIDS and its partners in addressing the global AIDS epidemic.

Mr Sidibé stressed that countries can and should actively promote tolerance and inclusion, as well as confront homophobia and gender violence.

On the issue of human rights violations against sexual minorities, Mr Sidibé stressed that laws criminalizing sex between men drive the HIV epidemic underground, increasing the isolation of gays, bisexuals and transgender people and making them more reluctant to come forward to access HIV services.

Currently, 84 countries in the world have legislation that prohibits same sex behaviour. In the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, governments committed to removing these legal barriers and passing laws to protect vulnerable populations. Countries that have non-discrimination laws against men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and sex workers have achieved higher rates of coverage of HIV prevention efforts.

Mr Sidibé's messages were fitting as many of the LGBT-themed films at this year's Berlinale concentrated on stigma and discrimination, the impact of AIDS as well as other challenges LGBT face in society.

Mr Sidibé said UNAIDS will continue to place human rights at the centre of its agenda and protect and support the rights of the LGBT community.

Other special guests at this year's TEDDY Award included the mayor of Berlin, Mr Klaus Wowereit, the Ambassador of Mali in Germany, Ms Fatoumata Sire Diakite, British actress Tilda Swinton, American actor Joe Dallesandro, Dr Gottfried Langenstein, the president of ARTE (the French-German public broadcaster), and several German politicians. The host of the ceremony was Annette Gerlach, head of culture at ARTE.

In addition to the Teddy Award ceremony, Mr Sidibé met with the German Minister for Health, Ms Ulla Schmidt, the Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ms Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, several delegates from the German Federal Parliament, and **representatives of the Berliner AIDS-Hilfe** and the Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe, two NGOs engaged in HIV advocacy and policy in Berlin and Germany, respectively.