WHO launches new HIV/AIDS guide to help countries reach universal access

5 August 2008, MEXICO CITY – Today, at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a package of priority interventions designed to help low- and middle-income countries move towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support.

Priority interventions: HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care in the health sector is a compilation of WHO-recommended priority HIV/AIDS health-sector interventions. It includes everything from how to expand condom programming to the latest in treatment recommendations, guidelines and standards. The publication is designed to be a ‘living’ web-based document that will be periodically updated with new recommendations based on the rapidly evolving experience of the health-sector response.

“This document responds to a long standing country need,” says WHO HIV/AIDS Department Director, Dr Kevin M. De Cock. “In one place it captures WHO’s best guidance on what the global HIV/AIDS health-sector response needs to deliver.”

To that end, WHO has developed this package to promote the more efficient use of existing recommendations specifically aimed at resource-limited settings. This, its authors state, will help enable countries to meet their commitment made two years ago at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS to provide universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

The purpose of Priority Interventions is to:

- describe priority health-sector HIV/AIDS interventions that are needed to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care;
- guide the selection and prioritization of interventions for HIV prevention, treatment and care; and,
- direct readers to key WHO resources and references containing the best available information on the health-sector response to HIV/AIDS.

The scale-up of HIV treatment in the world’s poorest countries is greatly strengthening the health sector in many ways such as the establishment and expansion of infrastructure, including labs and clinics, a stronger health workforce, more efficient procurement and supply management systems and sustained financing. WHO is initially launching the document on a CD-Rom but will make it available in several formats, including in hard copy and on the web. The intent is to share information and allow partners to learn from, and contribute their expertise to, the health-sector response to HIV/AIDS.