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## **THE CNS CALLS FOR CONCRETE MEASURES REGARDING ACCESS TO TREATMENT IN COUNTRIES IN THE SOUTH**

Twenty years after the start of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, 40 million people are living with the virus. Antiretroviral treatments have changed the face of the epidemic in countries in the North. In the most-affected African countries, life expectancy is less than 40 years. Due to the lack of treatment 95% of the people infected in the South will not see out the decade. Three million of them died in 2001. Access to these therapies is a decisive factor not only in the fight against the HIV epidemic, but also as regards the preventative dimension of the epidemic.

The Conseil national du sida (CNS) has taken up a stance in favour of across-the-board access to treatments in the area of HIV/AIDS. It has thus clearly asserted that the right to health must prevail over intellectual property rights. This responsibility is incumbent on the international community as a whole.

The UN Organisation special session in June 2001 on HIV/AIDS established a commitment to treat people who are living with HIV. In November 2001 discussions on intellectual property protection agreements in world trade at the ministerial WTO conference in Doha confirmed the possibility of using generic medicine when the health situation so requires.

The Conseil national du sida is delighted by the drops in prices of medicine which have already taken place. But the specific implementation of the principles is too slow and the political will that has been demonstrated must now be accompanied by actual funding and the provision of these treatments.