GCWA STATEMENT ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL’S REPORT:

A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) welcomes the United Nations Secretary General’s report, “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”. With its emphasis on continuing robust investment to achieve the MDGs and sustain progress made, the report resonates strongly with the principles and vision of the GCWA, in particular its promotion of gender equality, empowerment women and girls and the necessity to respond to HIV.

The Secretary General’s report outlines a mandate to tackle exclusion and inequality, stating that, "in order to leave no one behind and bring everyone forward, actions are needed to promote equality of opportunity". The GCWA echoes this call, highlighting the need for the meaningful involvement of women and girls in all their diversity, including women living with HIV, women engaged in sex work and/or injecting drugs, and transgender women.

The Secretary General’s report asserts that the post 2015 agenda, "must ensure zero tolerance for violence against, or exploitation of, women and girls," issues also recognized in UNAIDS Strategy 2011-2015 to be undermining an effective response to the HIV epidemic. A growing body of evidence has shown that violence against women increases the risk of HIV acquisition, while women living with HIV are at increased risk of experiencing violence. Ending the HIV epidemic requires taking a political stand against violence, ensuring a coordinated multi-sectoral response to prevent violence against women and managing its consequences.

The GCWA applauds the report’s focus on equality rights for and empowerment of women and girls and for ending child marriage, as well as women and girls’ full participation in the political, economic and public spheres. The GCWA particularly welcomes the Secretary General’s continued commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights, highlighting the need for accessible and sensitive sexual and reproductive health services for young people, including young women. The GCWA is committed to further the rights of women and girls, and reaffirms that actualization of true sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls will also require that services honor the full autonomy and choice of women, free of coercion; with emphasis on the health and well-being of the women throughout their life span. Sustainable development must include an emphasis on ensuring that comprehensive HIV and sexual and reproductive health information and services, including comprehensive sexuality education, are available and accessible for women and girls without regard to HIV status, geography, sexuality, culture or economic status. As such, the GCWA urges for global health in the post-2015 era “allows for an integrated response to sexual and reproductive health and HIV recognizing that sexual and reproductive health and rights are crucial to individual, family and community health as well as the well-being, participation and the economic and psychological empowerment of women and girls”, as reflected in its post 2015 key messages 1. The GCWA strongly recommends the incorporation of gender equality

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1 GCWA Key Messages on Positioning Gender Equality and HIV for the Post-2015 Development Agenda
into the post-2015 agenda as a clear term that has a demonstrated relation to eliminating women’s vulnerability to HIV.

The GCWA is founded on robust and transparent partnerships that place the needs and perspectives of civil society, particularly women and girls in all their diversity, at the centre of its work. We firmly support the Secretary General’s call for direct engagement of citizens and responsible businesses, making use of new technologies to expand coverage, to disaggregate data and to reduce costs. GCWA strongly welcomes the call for comprehensive monitoring and robust accountability mechanisms that will be supported by increased data disaggregation, including by gender and age. As the lack of funding and under-representation of women and girls in national responses to HIV and gender inequality often go unnoticed and unchallenged, there is also need to ensure that data reflects the lived realities of women and girls.

The GCWA welcomes the opportunity to provide continued support and guidance in shaping and implementing a people-centered and rights-based post 2015 Agenda that keeps the needs and realities of women and girls globally integrated, articulated and resourced.