



ALBANIAN DELEGATION TO THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS  
New York, 8-10 June 2011

Statement by Mr. Ferit Hoxha, Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative

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Mr. President,

HIV/AIDS remains one of the very serious and highly concerning issues of the today's world. Other than a health issue, this scourge is also emerging as one of the great economic, social, security and development challenges of this century, with a dramatic and devastating impact to both, people, families, as well as whole communities around the globe.

The world community therefore, has to continue to face it with courage and dedication, in a battle we all have to win through united efforts, shared responsibility, and serious commitment – everyone at home, altogether in our common world.

In this context we welcome this High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, which aims at comprehensively review the progress achieved in implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, and more importantly, to try and chart the future of the global HIV response through determined leadership.

The meeting takes place after three decades of the HIV epidemic, ten years from the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and five years after the adoption of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. It is a clear evidence of the concern and attention, the international community and the United Nations in particular, is continuing to place on this very important issue.

We think it fits this meeting to commend the work and efforts of the international community, United Nations and in particular its specialized agencies, which through global awareness of the disease, through education and dissemination of information to the public; through strengthening the capacity of communities with the engagement of civil society in the fight against the disease, as well as by taking many other practical measures have enabled a substantial reduction of the new HIV infections in a growing number of countries.

We believe success in that field can only be achieved through the continued active collaboration of all partners, including governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

Mr. President,

Albania is still considered a low HIV prevalence country. However this issue has over the years acquired an ever growing high attention. It is nowadays part of national policies, plans and programmes, as part of an overall national strategy under implementation in all the necessary areas – awareness, prevention and care.

Various measures have been taken to strengthen the national response to the disease, both at governmental and civil society level. Government bodies have been strengthened and mobilized to coordinate the efforts

and activities on HIV/AIDS nation-wide; the necessary legal framework has been strengthened and worked on; HIV/AIDS education is included in the school curricula; specific medical centers have been set up. In general a higher political commitment for combating national HIV/AIDS has been reflected.

However, overall it seems that there has been a reported upward trend in the number of new cases diagnosed as HIV positive cases. Some estimates indicate a higher number of undiagnosed cases<sup>1</sup>. The number of HIV infected persons for the period 1993 to 2007 was 255 people. This number increased to 291 by the end of 2008 and data reveal that about 70% of HIV positive cases are in the below-34 year age group. The age category that is most exposed to potential of HIV risk infection are those between 16 and 24 years. This category includes those who drop out of school, who emigrate and who have observed changes in sexual behaviour. Males are affected more by HIV than females.

Knowledge and awareness on HIV prevention needs to improve. As serious surveys show, the population aged between 15 to 24 years with comprehensive or correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS is still low.

Still government acting alone is not likely to be fully capable of mounting the response needed to reverse the trend. Fully aware and recognizing this fact, efforts have extended beyond government and the active involvement of civil society is encouraged and supported. Particular sectors of civil society continue to play a critical role in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>1</sup> INSTAT/IPH, 2010, Demographic Health Survey 2008-2009.

Through their partnership with the government as well as international donors and organizations, a variety of public activities have been organized, with a focus in various areas of expertise, such as education, communication, contraceptive promotion, safer behavior, confidentiality, preventive measures etc. Various projects and programs addressing the community, strengthening its knowledge on the factors that fuel the epidemic as well as strengthening their capacity for prevention, care and treatment, are being implemented.

Mr. President,

We are conscious that much more needs to be done to ensure that obstacles to implementation and reinforce HIV/AIDS strategies should be further addressed. The responses are not yet strong enough to fully prevent the spread of the disease. Education, care and support need more to be strengthened and expanded at all local levels.

Once again we reiterate our appreciation for this high level meeting on HIV/AIDS, which, we are confident, will scale up action on all fronts in the battle against the disease in order to reach the targets contained in the Declaration of Commitment, the Political Declaration and the UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals.

Last but in no way least, allow me Mr. President to thank the two co-facilitators: Ambassadors Ntwaagae of the Republic of Botswana and Quinlan of Australia for their diligent work in drafting the outcome of the meeting, in implementing Resolution 65/180 of December 2010.

I thank you.