

AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement

By

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Check against Delivery

Mr. President
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a particular honour and privilege for me to represent Austria at this high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS. At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank the Secretary-General for initiating a review of the progress that has been made since the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS in 2001, the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS at the high-level meeting in 2006 and the 2008 High-level Meeting on Aids. I also wish to commend the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report on the implementation of the two landmark declarations which he released in March. This report, based on the latest data, includes very valuable recommendations which will prove crucial in the struggle of the international community to reach the ambitious target of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement of the European Union. In addition, we would like to mention some points which are of particular importance to Austria. First, allow me to briefly inform you of Austria's internal initiatives in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Shortly after the onset of the epidemic, the Austrian government passed legislation establishing stringent safety standards to prevent nosocomial infections, guaranteeing blood and product safety, and providing free access to HIV/AIDS testing and medical treatment.

These legislative measures were accompanied by comprehensive informational campaigns targeting both the general public and specifically vulnerable groups. These educational campaigns disseminated information about HIV transmission and prevention, while addressing gender-specific and discrimination issues. These measures were supported by an additional package of harm reduction programmes for people at risk, including programmes for the provision of clean needles and syringes, as well as a drug-substitution programme. Especially effective have been measures in the field

of vertical transmission and reproductive health, which have nearly eliminated mother-to-child transmission in Austria.

Since 1997, Austria has instituted advanced procedures to provide access to treatment and care for all, in medical facilities as well as extramural settings throughout the country, at no cost to HIV/AIDS patients. These protocols have dramatically decreased the numbers of both new infections and AIDS deaths. Nevertheless, prevention remains our main focus in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

Austria is convinced that both prevention and access to affordable medication - especially in our worst-affected partner countries in sub-Saharan-Africa - are essential, if we are to reach the goal of zero new HIV infections. This is why we stress the importance of a comprehensive approach, including bio-medical treatments, behavioural changes, and structural interventions which will modify harmful gender norms and end gender-based violence. This approach should be complemented by access to comprehensive sexuality education and prevention and treatment options, particularly for young people. Since the adoption of the 2001 Declaration, we have seen an encouraging 12% reduction globally in the numbers of young people aged 15 to 24 years living with HIV - from an estimated 5.7 million in 2001, to 5.0 million in 2010. Certainly, this is success, but it is not more than a step in the right direction. Much more needs to be done.

I would like to emphasize the importance of paying special attention to the prevention needs of key populations at higher risk, in particular men who have sex with men, IV drug-users, and sex workers - as well as their clients, for lowering the rate of HIV transmission. Protecting the health and human rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups is an end in itself as well as essential in halting the AIDS epidemic. Austria advocates for non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources to these at-risk groups, and to the communities in which they live. This approach is by no means an attempt to

minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger associated with the abuse of either legal or illegal drugs.

Mr. President,

It will not be possible to achieve the goal of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths without a social and legal environment that actively promotes the health, fundamental human rights, security and dignity of women and girls. We are convinced that gender inequality and social inequity are the driving forces of the epidemic. Successful HIV prevention and treatment requires serious progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV-infected women between 15 and 24 years constitute more than 60% of all young people living with HIV worldwide. In this respect, allow me to stress the particular importance of determined and effective national response to HIV/Aids. Without strong national ownership and the concomitant establishment of systems that effectively protect and empower women and girls, international support will be fruitless in the long run.

Austria is especially worried by the increasing feminization of HIV/AIDS, since more women and girls are becoming infected. To reverse this alarming trend, efforts need to be stepped up to guarantee women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services. We are convinced that linking HIV/AIDS with sexual and reproductive health care is an essential strategy for moving towards the target of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support.

Another factor that is contributing to the feminization of HIV infection is sexual and gender-based violence, which is one of the most persistent and destructive threats to the health and security of women and girls. The fate of women affected by armed conflicts and their role in peace building continues to be one of the priorities of Austria's policy in development cooperation. The implementation of the objectives of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in the daily work of the Security Council was a

priority during our membership in the Security Council in 2009 and 2010. Important milestones during Austria's membership at the Security Council were the adoptions of Security Council resolutions 1882 "Children in Armed Conflict", 1888 "Women, Peace and Security" and 1894 "Protection of Civilians". We are pleased that the Security Council held a debate on the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on international peace and security on 7 June.

Mr. President,

Austria will continue to support international efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. We were very proud to have hosted the eighteenth International AIDS Conference in Vienna during July 2010, which was organized by the International AIDS Society in cooperation with UNAIDS and other partners. A total of 25,000 attendees, and 6,000 journalists, participated in this groundbreaking conference in Vienna. The Conference proved to be a valuable contribution toward achieving the Millennium Development Goal of providing universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Please allow me to reaffirm Austria's firm support for the Millennium Development Goals, including Millennium Development Goal 6 to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The Austrian Development Cooperation Programme includes HIV/AIDS in an array of strategies and programmes, in particular in our priority region sub-Saharan Africa. As part of this effort, Austrian Development Cooperation continuously supports the activities of UNAIDS by yearly funding the core-budget of the joint programme.

In addition, Austria has a long tradition of supporting UNDP's Thematic Trust Fund on HIV/AIDS, and co-financed a UNICEF HIV/AIDS-related project for women and children in the Ukraine. Austria will continue to support the work of the relevant organizations and programmes of the United Nations family, in particular the work of UNAIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. President,

We note that there has been an impressive increase in development co-operation funds made available for the health sector, especially for communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Funds for health care more than doubled in the last decade and, according to OECD, approximately one hundred Global Health Initiatives now offer assistance to developing countries. We applaud the international community for this impressive effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. If we keep this global momentum going, in particular with regard to the fight against HIV/AIDS, the ultimate goal of a world with no new HIV infections, no more discrimination, and no AIDS-related deaths may come true.

Thank you, Mr. President!