



ITALY

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW
OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN REALIZING THE DECLARATION OF
COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS AND THE POLITICAL DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS**

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

(NEW YORK, 10 JUNE 2011)

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this High-Level Meeting on behalf of Italy.

While Italy fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, I would like to share some additional thoughts and underline the importance we attach to the fight against HIV-AIDS.

Since the historic 2001 United Nations Special Session on HIV-AIDS, great progress has been made in the fight against one of the deadliest diseases of our times. While much has been achieved, however, still more needs to be done. The goal of a world with zero new infections requires greater efforts and commitment from everyone here today: governments, civil society, and the United Nations system.

Over 6 million people living with AIDS throughout the world are being treated today. In many countries the rate of new infections has dropped by more than 25%. Nevertheless, the number of new infections is still higher than the number of people starting treatment.

Fighting HIV-AIDS is a priority for Italy. We are committed to fighting this battle not only within our national borders, but also working with our partners in the developing world.

Prevention is the heart of our strategy. A successful strategy requires a holistic approach, combining the benefits of science and social policies.

With regard to drug abuse, last October the Italian government approved a National Antidrug Action Plan that recognizes that drug addiction is a preventable, treatable and curable disease and that the health of users should be protected by a "continuum of care" aiming at the full recovery of the individual and at preventing drug-related diseases such as HIV infection, hepatitis, and tuberculosis (TBC).

In this context, we believe that "harm-reduction" programs, if applied in isolation and outside of a medical context focused on the treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration and recovery of drug addicts, will not bear full results in the long term and will have less preventive effects. This is why we advocate the consideration of the additional concept of "risk reduction," which

is more directly linked to the prevention of HIV infection, as well as the linking of harm reduction to the WHO/UNAIDS/UNODC technical guide.

The fight against HIV-AIDS is also a main concern of our development cooperation health policies. Italy fully subscribes to the development strategies outlined in the Paris declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. We believe that national ownership, alignment with national policies, and mutual accountability are also cornerstones of the fight against HIV/AIDS.

We cannot overstate the importance of developing a strategic partnership with national governments to achieve the synergy so crucial to the success of our actions.

Italian development policy, as outlined in the guidelines on Italian Health Cooperation, treats the fight against AIDS and other infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria, as an integral part of the strategy to strengthen the structure of health services. No success can be achieved and sustained in the fight against AIDS, unless it is accompanied by structural interventions in favour of health services.

In this context, improving health-care human resources must take precedence.

Strengthened health systems and a greater number of health-care workers in the fight against AIDS will also have a positive impact on maternal, newborn and child health, thus contributing to the achievement of the health related Millennium Development Goals.

On this subject, we would like to recall the important role played by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to which Italy has contributed over one billion US dollars since its inception at the G8 Summit in Genoa in 2001. Despite current budgetary constraints, the Global Fund remains one of the most effective tools in the field of global health and we are convinced that the reforms undertaken by the Fund to improve efficiency and accountability, and the drafting of its new strategy, to which Italy subscribes, confirm its essential role in the coming years in achieving the Millennium Goals, especially to contain and ultimately defeat the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

HIV/AIDS has upended the lives of many families and hindered the economic development of large areas of our planet, making it impossible for children to go to school and perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty.

It is difficult to envision universal access without helping these poor families, so heavily afflicted by the consequences of disease, and giving them a chance to carry on with their lives. We must do our utmost to support them by providing home care, creating incentives for small income generating activities, and allowing the children to attend school.

Let me also underline the crucial impact of support for the fundamental human rights of people living with AIDS as well as the need to pursue gender equality policies and empowerment of women, as a milestone to prevent the spread of the HIV-AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

To recognize this crucial role of women in the development of Africa, Italy is strongly supporting the campaign, "Walking Africa Deserves a Nobel," which aims at proposing African women for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

Mr. President,

These are some of the reasons why we fully support the Political Declaration that is going to be adopted at the end of this meeting, which we believe will help to realize the Secretary-General's vision of a world with zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Thank you.