



2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS

General Assembly, United Nations, New York

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Uniting the world against AIDS

PRESS RELEASE

World leaders put forward a strengthened Political Declaration at UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS

New call for ambitious national targets, human rights protections and women's equality, as well as commitment to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, are highlighted

(New York, 2 June 2006) – A new political declaration on AIDS that strengthens the world's response to the epidemic will be presented to member states today for adoption. In his remarks at the General Assembly High Level Meeting, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called AIDS "the greatest challenge of our generation."

The new political declaration builds on the historic 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which was seen as turning point in the global response.

General Assembly President Jan Eliasson said that he had seen a new dynamic at the High Level Meeting, with Member States and civil society coming together as never before, in a genuine and vibrant interaction. "The voices of those living with HIV, and of other groups, have been powerfully heard," he said, "and this has contributed significantly to what I see as a good, substantial and forward-looking Declaration."

The 2006 Declaration reaffirms previous goals while also calling for ambitious national targets as the world moves toward universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. It also promotes the protection of human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, young people and especially girls to reduce their vulnerability to HIV.

The Declaration also calls for strengthened efforts to combat stigma and social exclusion connected with the epidemic, endorsing full rights for people living with and vulnerable to HIV, to education, inheritance, employment, health care, social and health services, legal protection and HIV information, prevention, support, and treatment.

"This Declaration moves the global response to AIDS a significant step forward by acknowledging both the need for AIDS crisis management today and for a sustained, long term response to AIDS in the years to come," said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director, UNAIDS.

"Member States took on the difficult issues brought forward by country constituencies and civil society this week. The result is a strong declaration that endorses strong national targets, comprehensive HIV prevention strategies, and protection for all people at risk for HIV."

The 2006 Declaration agrees that US\$20 – 23 billion dollars is needed for the AIDS response by 2010. It calls for the development of improved drugs, diagnostics and prevention technologies including vaccines and microbicides, and reaffirms that the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) does not prevent countries from protecting public health through the production of generic drugs.

A comprehensive approach to HIV prevention was endorsed by the 2006 Declaration, with specific mention of reducing risk-taking behaviours and encouraging responsible sexual behaviour, including abstinence and fidelity; expanded access to essential commodities, including male and female condoms and sterile injecting equipment; harm-reduction efforts related to drug use; expanded access to voluntary and confidential counselling and testing; safe blood supplies; and early and effective treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

Leaders of over 140 UN Member States, including a dozen Heads of State and Government, participated in the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS to report and review global progress in the AIDS response. On Tuesday UNAIDS released the most comprehensive global report on national responses ever undertaken. The report is available at www.unaids.org

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UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, brings together the efforts and resources of ten UN system organizations to the global AIDS response. Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Based in Geneva, the UNAIDS secretariat works on the ground in more than 75 countries world wide.

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