



2008 High-Level Meeting on AIDS

General Assembly, United Nations, New York

10 - 11 June 2008

Uniting the world against AIDS

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Press Release

Progress in AIDS response but still a long way from meeting global targets

Governments review international response to AIDS at United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting 10-11 June

New York, 9 June - Investments made in the AIDS response over the last 10 years are starting to bear fruit, according to a report by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon which highlights decreases in new HIV infections and AIDS deaths over the past decade.

However, despite the advances and increase in resources for HIV, which totalled US\$10 billion last year, the UN chief warned that the gap between available resources and actual need was hampering efforts to achieve universal access goals. "The world will fall short of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in the absence of a significant increase in the level of resources available for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries," he stated.

Mr. Ban will present his report to the UN General Assembly at a High-Level Meeting on AIDS to be held on 10-11 June at UN Headquarters in New York. During the meeting, Member States and representatives of civil society will review progress towards targets agreed by the Assembly in its 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and its 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), commended the UN Secretary-General on his report and highlighted the pressing need for stronger commitment to HIV prevention. "Every day, almost 7,000 people are needlessly infected with HIV because they do not have access to proven interventions to prevent transmission. It is time to act," he said.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights the unprecedented scale-up of access to antiretroviral treatment, which rose by 42 per cent in 2007. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, said, "The number of people receiving treatment has now reached 3 million people, 1.75 million of those through programmes supported by the Global Fund. This is a remarkable achievement by donors, technical partners like UNAIDS and its Cosponsors, and first and foremost by thousands of health and community workers worldwide. It shows what can be done with sufficient global and political will."

The report of the Secretary-General is based on analysis of inputs from Governments on national progress in the response to HIV. As of 10 March 2008, 147 countries had reported national information against 25 core indicators developed to track implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

The High-Level Meeting on AIDS will open with a formal plenary session of the General Assembly. Statements will be made by the President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, the Director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and an HIV-positive member of Coordination of Action Research on AIDS.

Key findings from the report of the UN Secretary-General

An estimated 33.2 million [range 30.6 – 36.1 million] people worldwide were living with HIV as of December 2007. The annual rate of new HIV infections appears to have decreased over the last decade, with an estimated 2.5 million people newly infected with HIV in 2007 – down from 3.2 million in 1998. The annual number of AIDS deaths has declined from 3.9 million in 2001 to 2.1 million in 2007.

Antiretroviral coverage reached 3 million people in low- and middle-income countries, approximately 30 per cent of those in need. Despite the existence of affordable treatments for tuberculosis, only 31 per cent of people with HIV/TB co-infection received both antiretroviral and anti-TB drugs in 2007.

Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 68 per cent of all adults living with HIV, 90 per cent of the world's HIV-infected children, and 76 per cent of all AIDS deaths in 2007. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most-affected region, where AIDS remains the leading cause of death. Worldwide, women represent half of all HIV infections among adults, but 61 per cent of those infected are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Although the rate of new infections has fallen globally, the number of people newly infected has increased in a number of countries, including China, Indonesia, Russia and Ukraine, in European Union countries and in North America.

The number of new infections has yet to fall in some of the most heavily affected countries, such as Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa. Moreover, even where infection levels have stabilized or declined, the dimensions of the epidemic remain alarming -- especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV remains one of the greatest threats to development.

The rate of progress in expanding access to essential services is failing to keep pace with the expansion of the epidemic itself. While an additional 1 million people were started on antiretrovirals in 2007, 2.5 million people were newly infected.

For more information, see: www.un.org/ga/aidsmeeting2008

All official meetings and press conferences will be webcast at: www.un.org/webcast

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