

**Statement to the Commission on Population and Development
Acting as Preparatory Committee for the Special Session
of the General Assembly**

As written



UNAIDS
UNICEF • UNDP • UNFPA
UNESCO • WHO • WORLD BANK

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

**PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Item 3 – Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly

Statement by

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**United Nations
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MISTER/MADAME CHAIR:

THE JOINT UN PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS, WELCOMES THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT, AND IN PARTICULAR, THE EMPHASIS IT PLACES ON THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF HIV/AIDS AND STDs. WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE DELEGATIONS TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION AT THIS MEETING TO HELP BREAK THE CURVE OF THE AIDS EPIDEMIC.

HIV/AIDS IS A DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE WHICH IS FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT PEOPLE AND SOCIETY. IN THE SECOND DECADE OF FIGHTING THE EPIDEMIC, WE HAVE SEEN ITS ENORMOUS AND TRAGIC IMPACT, NOT ONLY ON THE PERSONAL LIVES OF MILLIONS OF MEN, WOMEN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND CHILDREN ALL OVER THE WORLD, BUT ALSO ON THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONS. IT THREATENS COUNTRIES ALREADY STRUGGLING WITH HIGH POVERTY LEVELS, LIMITED GOVERNMENT RESOURCES, INADEQUATE HEALTH SYSTEMS, AND DEFICIENT SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS. IN THE MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES, AIDS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAMATIC DECREASES IN LIFE EXPECTANCY, DECLINING PER CAPITA INCOMES, SHRINKING PROFITS IN LABOR-INTENSIVE SECTORS, AND LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY, THUS ENDANGERING FOOD SECURITY. THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LOSSES DUE TO AIDS ARE CREATING A SPIRALLING NEGATIVE MOMENTUM, REVERSING HARD-WON DEVELOPMENT GAINS AND FORCING A RAPIDLY GROWING SEGMENT OF THE WORLD'S

POPULATION, INCLUDING WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, FURTHER AWAY FROM THE DEVELOPMENT MAINSTREAM. THUS, AIDS IS PERPETUATING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY, DEEPENING THE ALIENATION OF MORE AND MORE PEOPLE FROM THEIR FULL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS, AND INCREASING THEIR VULNERABILITY TO HIV INFECTION.

MISTER/MADAME CHAIR:

EACH OF US HAS A STAKE IN TRANSFORMING THIS GRIM PICTURE. WHILE THE CHALLENGES ARE ENORMOUS, WE MUST NOT VIEW THEM AS OVERWHELMING. WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN ASIA AND AFRICA, WHERE NATIONAL RESPONSES HAVE INCREASED IN SCOPE, EFFECTIVENESS, AND COMMITMENT. WHILE SOME COUNTRIES HAVE NOT YET FULLY CONFRONTED THE TRUTH OF THE EPIDEMIC, MANY OTHERS ARE NOW DEMONSTRATING THE POLITICAL WILL TO MOUNT A CONCERTED MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE TO THE DISEASE, AND TO PLACE HIV/AIDS PROMINENTLY ON THEIR DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS. WHERE ONCE THE FOCUS WAS SOLELY ON PERSONAL RISK BEHAVIOR, TODAY MANY COUNTRIES ARE ADDRESSING FACTORS OF RISK AND VULNERABILITY WHICH GO BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THE INDIVIDUAL, FACTORS SUCH AS GENDER INEQUALITIES, LACK OF EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY, POVERTY AND DISCRIMINATION.

THESE FACTORS HAVE ALSO BEEN GIVEN EXPLICIT RECOGNITION BY THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, WHICH EARLIER THIS MONTH ENDORSED A GROUND-BREAKING RESOLUTION ON WOMEN, THE

GIRL CHILD AND HIV/AIDS. THIS RESOLUTION REAFFIRMS THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN TO EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION, SKILLS TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT, AND EMPHASIZES THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AS A CRITICAL MEANS FOR PROTECTING THEMSELVES FROM HIV INFECTION. IT ALSO RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTION TECHNOLOGIES, SUCH AS THE FEMALE CONDOM AND MICROBICIDES, WHICH OFFER WOMEN MORE CONTROL FOR THE PROTECTION OF THEIR REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL HEALTH.

MISTER/MADAME CHAIR:

UNAIDS STANDS BEHIND THE FUTURE ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL. IN PARTICULAR, WE EXPRESS OUR RESOLUTENESS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR SIX CO-SPONSORS, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO AND THE WORLD BANK, IN PURSUING THE GOAL OF REDUCING HIV INFECTION RATES AMONG 15 TO 24 YEAR OLDS BY 25 PER CENT IN THE 25 MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES BY THE YEAR 2005. THIS GOAL WILL REQUIRE A WIDE ARRAY OF STRATEGIES RANGING FROM:

- . POLICY SUPPORT, BACKED UP BY THE NECESSARY RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS;
- . REFORMING AND STRENGTHENING PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS SO AS THEY CAN PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, AND QUALITY HEALTH CARE GEARED TOWARDS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF WOMEN, MEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE;

- MOBILIZATION OF NEW PARTNERSHIPS FROM ALL SEGMENTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY;
- . PROMOTION OF PREVENTION TECHNOLOGIES THAT WILL ENHANCE WOMEN'S RISK-REDUCTION OPTIONS; AND
- . TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURES AIMED AT REDUCING GENDER AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST ALL REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE THE STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION WHICH IS ALL TOO OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH HIV/AIDS AND STDs. FOR IT IS STIGMA THAT ENFORCES THE CULTURE OF SILENCE – A SILENCE THAT BECOMES A BARRIER TO PREVENTION AND CARE. IT IS DISCRIMINATION THAT UNDERMINES THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF HIV-POSITIVE PEOPLE TO A LIFE WITH DIGNITY. AND IT IS THESE TWO FACTORS TOGETHER THAT BREAK DOWN OUR SOCIAL COHESION, HINDERING THE ABILITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES TO COME FORTH IN SOLIDARITY WITH ALL THOSE WHO ARE AFFECTED BY AIDS.

UNAIDS CALLS ON THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS, AS WELL AS THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND ITS MANY PARTNERS, TO NURTURE THE DIALOGUE AROUND THE ISSUES OF HIV/AIDS, AND TO JOIN IN THE GLOBAL EFFORT TO STOP THE EPIDEMIC.

THANK YOU, MISTER/MADAME CHAIR.