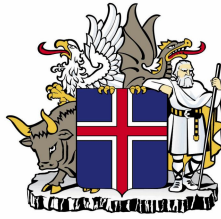


2008 High Level Plenary Meeting on AIDS
United Nations, New York, 10 June 2008



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson
Minister of Health**

**2008 Comprehensive Review of the Progress Achieved in Realizing the
Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on
HIV/AIDS**

New York June 10th, 2008

Iceland

First time candidate to the
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The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations
800 Third Ave. 36th fl. - Tel 212-593-2700. - Fax 212-593-6269
www.iceland.org/un/nyc - www.iceland.org/securitycouncil

Mr. President, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

At the outset I would like to welcome the report of the Secretary General on the progress achieved midway to the Millennium Development Goals in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. It is encouraging to observe that since 2006 progress in containing the HIV epidemic is now being seen in nearly all regions of the world.

However, as the report clearly shows these positive trends are not uniform. Serious challenges remain. New infections continue to increase in several countries. Coverage for essential HIV prevention, treatment, care and support remains far too low in many parts of the world to have a major impact on the course of the epidemic. Especially in the countries most heavily affected by HIV, the epidemic's impact sadly continues to grow, with increasing numbers of HIV-affected households and children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV. Let me also say that I am deeply concerned about the overall expansion of the epidemic among women, children and vulnerable groups. These groups must always be centrally involved in actions undertaken against the HIV epidemic. I want to emphasize what President Srgjan Kerim said in his opening speech. We can not make

progress when the many teachers of children in some countries are dying from HIV/AIDS. Well educated children are the hope for an AIDS free world.

The rate of progress in expanding access to essential services is failing to keep pace with the expansion of the epidemic itself, a shortcoming that is especially evident with respect to HIV prevention. Unless the international community takes immediate action to follow through on the pledges made to implement an exceptional response to HIV, the epidemic's humanitarian and economic toll will continue to increase.

Mr. President

It is only two years before the deadline for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support and midway towards the target date of 2015 for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Current trends suggest that the global community will fall short of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services, without a significant increase in the level of resources available for HIV programs in low- and middle-income countries.

Substantially greater progress will be required to achieve universal access to HIV treatment and care. Much has been achieved in reducing prices for many first-line antiretrovirals over the last decade. Further price reductions for antiretrovirals will be needed to ensure the

sustainability of treatment programs, especially with respect to newer antiretroviral drugs. Accordingly, Iceland has adopted legislation on compulsory licensing to make it possible to assist those in need with affordable medicines facilitating our efforts in providing sustainable antiretroviral treatment coverage. An Icelandic pharmaceutical company is currently in the process of obtaining for prequalification licence from WHO to produce affordable antiretroviral drugs.

I am pleased to be able to inform you Mr. President that the Icelandic Government has decided to contribute to the Global Fund with the sum of one million US dollars during the next three years.

Mr. President,

I was very moved to listen to Ms Ratri Suksma this morning describing the situation of those living with HIV and I want to join Secretary General Ban Ki-moon when he said in his remarks that he admired the courage of the people living with HIV. They are certainly the heroes of our time.

To conclude, I would like to state I truly believe we can reach the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals and I agree with my distinguished colleague from Malawi that we do that with a combined concerted effort of all nations. Tackling the epidemic is our common task.

Thank you.