



Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

**HON. DR. TAMSIR MBOWE
SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL WELFARE**

AT

**THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON HIV/AIDS**

**NEW YORK
31ST MAY – 2ND JUNE 2006**

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**YOUR EXCELLENCIES
THE U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL
DISTINGUISHED SUMMIT DELEGATES
ALL PROTOCOLS RESPECTFULLY OBSERVED
MR. CHAIRMAN,**

Foremost, may I convey the apology of H.E. The President Dr. Alhaji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, for not being able to attend this high level meeting, because of other pressing national duties.

You may recall that The Gambia will host the forth coming A.U. Summit in early July 2006 and this requires nothing less than total commitment.

Your Excellencies, The Gambia is a Signatory to the General Assembly Resolution 60/224 of 23rd December 2005.

Since the passing of that Resolution, my Government has been fully engaged in a comprehensive global response to contain the Pandemic.

Your Excellencies, HIV is the most formidable Pathogen to confront modern medicine. Therefore, the response to it has to be focused, concerted, relentless as well as Sustained.

In this process, strong political leadership must be demonstrated. This is why World Leaders signed the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS in 2001.

Since that Declaration, The Gambia has scaled-up and intensified a comprehensive campaign against the Pandemic. Additional resources have been mobilized through the World Bank, the Global Fund and other bi-lateral Organisations.

My Government has provided Anti-Retroviral Drugs at no cost to people living with AIDS.

Distinguished Participants, you may recall that at the 55th Session of the W.H.O. Regional Committee for Africa (Maputo-Mozambique), the year 2006 was declared as the year of acceleration of HIV Prevention in the African Region.

Accordingly, Your Excellencies, The Gambia has recently launched its own Programme of "Acceleration of Prevention". My Government has already embarked on an aggressive Prevention Campaign, with a sense of urgency and renewed vigour, in synergy with treatment efforts.

Distinguished Delegates, The Gambia is among those few African Countries with declining HIV Prevalence rates. To maintain this momentum, my Government puts special emphasis on equity and social justice by ensuring that resources reach operational levels through grassroots organisations.

The Gambia recently conducted its National Sentinel Surveillance on HIV/AIDS exercise and established that HIV/AIDS prevalence in The Gambia had dropped by a full percentage point, from 2.1% to 1.1% in respect of HIV1, and from 0.9% to 0.6% for HIV2. This is a result of the unrelenting efforts of the Government of The Gambia in the pursuit of preventive public information and awareness programmes and the activities of the National AIDS Council and the National AIDS Secretariat.

The Government of The Gambia recognizes the important role of PLWHAs in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Their involvement is an important component in our National Strategy. In collaboration with partners, 5 Support Groups were established and are being supported in the fight against stigma and discrimination. They are also represented in the National AIDS Council.

Your Excellencies, People living with AIDS must move from the margin of hopelessness, into the centre of courage and positive living.

To be HIV positive does not necessarily indicate a hopeless prognosis with impending doom. Hope itself, is born out of hopelessness. The worst thing to fear, is fear itself.

We cannot contain HIV/AIDS by working in isolation as members of specific sectors, or in collaboration as members of a loose amalgamation, but we can by working together as members of a cohesive and concerted multi-sectoral force, be able to put a stop to the challenge it offers.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, HIV/AIDS does not recognize geographic or political boundaries. Therefore, Taiwan's exclusions from International Health interventions and control networks pose a serious threat to both Taiwan itself and the world community at large. Taiwan should be accorded full and unhindered access to global disease prevention.

The World Health Organisation is the United Nations' specialized agency mandated to regulate international health. Accordingly, the WHO constitution enshrines the principle that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. It is therefore regrettable that the health and medical rights of the 23 million people in Taiwan still have not been covered and protected by the WHO.

I thank you for your kind attention.