



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY
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AT THE

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING AND COMPREHENSIVE
REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED
IN REALIZING THE TARGETS SET OUT IN THE
DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT
ON HIV/AIDS

NEW YORK
02 JUNE 2006

Pakistan's Statement at the High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS

2 June 2006

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam-o-Alaikum and a very good morning

I am pleased to be present amongst this august gathering where we are reviewing the progress made on the Declaration of Commitments on HIV/AIDS adopted in 2001.

At this moment, I would also like to express my deepest condolences for Dr. J. W. Lee's untimely and tragic death whose relentless efforts on HIV/AIDS were an inspiration for all of us.

Mr. President

Undoubtedly, HIV/AIDS has emerged as the single most formidable challenge to public health, human rights and development in the new millennium. Despite the significant increase in the global commitments to control the HIV/AIDS pandemic in recent years, the virus continues to spread with alarming speed. By the end of 2005, an estimated 40 million people worldwide were living with HIV infection or disease, a notable rise from the 35 million infected with HIV in 2001. In 2005 only, close to 5 million new HIV infections and 3 million AIDS deaths occurred, more of both than any previous year. Since the signing of the Declaration of Commitment more than 20 million people have become infected with HIV worldwide, including 3 million infants who contracted HIV during gestation or as a result of breastfeeding.

Since the HIV/AIDS infection cuts across all socio-economic groups, its transmission follows paths created by economic, social, political and gender inequalities, which include but are not limited to poor access to diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, living away from families and indulging in high risk behaviors.

In South Asia, the epidemic has become a major public health threat. Considering the social construct of society and economic disparities in the region, control and prevention of the epidemic shall go beyond biomedical interventions only. This warrants a broader, comprehensive and inclusive policies and programs involving all stakeholders.

Despite relatively lower prevalence, HIV/AIDS is a growing concern for Pakistan where according to recent estimates, there are approximately 75,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Since the Declaration of 2001, Pakistan has made considerable progress towards fulfilling its commitments. We are among the countries, which are closely observing and implementing the agreed protocols and guidelines.

Pakistan recognizes the importance of a comprehensive policy framework that must seek to protect and promote all human rights, recognize the epidemic's gender dimensions, contribute to the eradication of stigma and discrimination and promote the active engagement and involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in the society.

Mr. President

We need to formulate effective policies to respond to this epidemic. There is a sense of urgency to expand the scope of services of HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Within this background the role of intergovernmental agencies and leadership becomes critical towards generating support for HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs. Above all it must be recognized that the challenge of HIV can be met more effectively only by considering it an integral component of overall human development policies, plans and programs.

However, many of the ambitious targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment cannot be implemented at the national levels until supplemented by a strong commitment from the international community in providing sustained and predictable support to fill the resource gaps. This would require expanding partnerships with countries and across borders in the international community. The response to HIV/AIDS requires not only higher spending on HIV-specific programs but also broader international partnerships that assist countries to alleviate poverty and sustain their development policies and plans.

One of the crucial factors in this regard is the access to retro-viral drugs. They are needed NOW. Hence it is imperative to make them available at affordable cost. We understand that for the pharmaceutical industry, profits are important. But human lives are even more important. Similarly, the issue of patent rights etc. should not be an impediment in providing these drugs. Generic drugs are indeed an issue of life and death for the millions of infected people.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

We still have a long way to go to realize our dream of halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and reverse the tide by 2015. Realization of this dream would require strong political commitment and action by the national and global leadership, more allocation of funds for research and development, active engagement of civil society, culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions and above all, universal access to anti-retroviral therapy. Above all peace and development remain imperative to combating the crisis of HIV/AIDS.

Let us give hope to millions of the affected people. This Assembly should provide hope to each and every HIV/AIDS victim that the international community is united in responding to this global challenge.

We are one race, the human race. We have to live together. We have to help each other. We have to accommodate each other. Nothing is politically right which is morally wrong. We must have the courage to do the right things and I am confident that this august House has the courage, determination and will to do just that for all of humanity.

I thank you.