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Statement by

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**Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session:
implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: High-
level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS**

2 June 2006

Check Against Delivery

In three days time, it will be exactly 25 years since AIDS was first discovered.

Twenty five years in which millions have wept as they watched those they loved taken from them by this terrible disease.

Twenty five years in which every one of our countries has had to face up to this epidemic.

Twenty five years to reach this moment where, finally, we know what needs to be done to defeat this disease, and where all that remains is for us to find both the means and the will to act.

One of the reasons we are here today is because last year the G8 and the World Summit agreed that we needed a way forward. Plans for HIV prevention, treatment and care to get us as close as possible to universal access to treatment for all who need it by 2010.

Our job today is to agree that way forward so that we can get on and make it happen.

So what do we need to do ?

First, countries in the front line of the fight against AIDS must set out how they intend to defeat it. Costed plans for AIDS, linked to 10 year health plans – to build the clinics and the hospitals, get rid of the user fees so that people can seek help, employ the doctors and the nurses, do the tests, buy the anti-retroviral drugs, and offer the treatment. Universal access will be impossible unless decent healthcare for all becomes available in every community, village, town and city.

Secondly, no costed and credible plan should go unfunded and I'm glad this is in our Declaration. Every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that the money is there. The international community needs to back these AIDS plans with long-term, predictable funding for health and education. That's why increased aid matters. That's why replenishing the Global Fund matters. That's why the UK is playing its part as the second largest donor on AIDS in the world.

Thirdly, these AIDS plans need to have targets so we can measure progress, country by country. That is why we needed in our Declaration interim targets for 2008 so that we can see how far we have got – and how far we have yet to go – to reach our goal by 2010. And we have got them.

Fourthly, we need to recognise that tackling AIDS is not only about money. It's also about culture and social attitudes. It's about recognising that while treatment is the key to keeping alive people living with AIDS today, prevention is the key to achieving an AIDS-free generation tomorrow. It's about being honest about what the problem is and about telling the truth about what works. I wish we could have been a bit more frank in our Declaration about telling the truth:

That some groups – like sex workers, drug users and men who have sex with men - are more at risk

That some young women – from choice or necessity - exchange sex for money or food.

That stigma, discrimination and the unequal position of women and girls in societies make it more difficult to fight this disease.

That accurate information, access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and upholding human rights all matter in this fight

That condoms protect people from HIV

That clean needles stop injecting drug users from passing on HIV

That abstinence is fine for those who are able to abstain, but that human beings like to have sex and they should not die because they do have sex.

Now I recognise that some of these truths are difficult and uncomfortable. But I would simply say that we cannot let discomfort get in the way of saving lives, just as we cannot let prejudice get in the ways of the facts.

Because it is the facts about AIDS - 25 million human beings dead already, 40 million living with HIV, 15 million children orphaned – that cause us to be here today.

And it is our responsibility to make sure that 25 years from now we can look back and say; we faced the facts, we saw what needed to be done, and we did it.