



PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

Her Excellency the Deputy Minister for Health

Mrs. Carmen Pignatelli

**to the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly
on HIV/AIDS**

New York

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Please check against delivery

Mister President of the General Assembly

Mister Secretary General

Heads of State and of Government

Ladies and Gentlemen

Portugal aligns itself fully with the statement already delivered by Austria on behalf of the European Union, and we take this opportunity to touch upon some issues of particular relevance to our country.

Twenty five years into the epidemic, the world possesses, for the first time ever, the means to begin to reverse the global epidemic. However unprecedented global, regional and national willingness is crucial to make it succeed.

Recognizing that an effective HIV response demands adequate financing to scale up and sustain prevention, treatment, care and support for those affected, Portugal has committed to contribute to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis with US\$ 5 million for 2006-2007 period.

Portugal acknowledges that since the Special Session in 2001 much of the 2005 targets remain unmet in the country and that monitoring and evaluating progress poses an undelayable challenge, in spite of the remarkable role played by the former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, in keeping HIV/AIDS in the national and international political agendas.

We see in his recent appointment as UN Special Envoy for the fight against tuberculosis signs of clear recognition of his commitment.

Mr. President

Special concern arises from the Secretary Generals' report on progress in prevention efforts. Numerous factors continue to hinder the implementation of evidence-based, cost effective and non judgemental prevention measures. HIV prevention programmes are failing to reach most at risk populations and remain inadequate for young people. Stigma and discrimination remain serious

obstacles to HIV prevention; HIV responses are insufficiently grounded in the promotion and protection of human rights.

In the case of Portugal which, in the European context, faces a relevant AIDS problem, with one of highest incidence rates, I would like to highlight some important political measures that contributed to reverse the incidence of new HIV infections among injecting drug users and to address other issues that affect other most vulnerable populations: national syringes exchange program, since 1994, automatic approval of new ARVs since 1996, scaling-up of substitution programs, in 1998, decriminalisation act for drug consumption, in 2001, access to health care services for legal and illegal immigrants and a recent appointment of an expert group to address Public Health concerns in prisons.

Also, evidence in our country has shown that special attention to women's health and rights is the cornerstone to achieve the highest attainable standard of health. This has led to a reduction of mother to child transmission of HIV to almost undetectable levels, including in our large migrant community – both legal and illegal.

Mr. President

Portugal reiterates its' support to the Declaration of Commitment and we reinforce our compromise and political leadership at the highest level, to its full implementation, in partnership with civil society, people living with HIV/AIDS and the private sector.

This renewed commitment must continue to lead our collective and individual efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic and contribute to keep AIDS at the top of the international political agenda as a humanitarian issue and a serious threat to the security and to the economic and social development of many countries and regions.