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DÉCLARATION DE

L'HONORABLE JOSÉE VERNER
MINISTRE DE LA COOPÉRATION INTERNATIONALE ET
MINISTRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE ET DES LANGUES OFFICIELLES

À LA RÉUNION DE HAUT NIVEAU ET EXAMEN D'ENSEMBLE DES PROGRÈS
ACCOMPLIS DANS LA RÉALISATION DES OBJECTIFS FIXÉS DANS LA
DÉCLARATION D'ENGAGEMENT SUR LE VIH/SIDA

À LA SOIXANTIÈME SESSION DE L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE DES NATIONS UNIES

NEW YORK, LE 2 JUIN 2006

STATEMENT BY

THE HONOURABLE JOSÉE VERNER
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND
MINISTER FOR LA FRANCOPHONIE AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

TO 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

AT THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 2 JUNE 2006

Mr. President, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying on behalf of Canada how sad we are to have recently lost our colleague, Dr. Lee Jong-wook. Dr. Lee was remarkable for many of his contributions, not the least his efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. It is fitting that as we go forward, we bring with us his commitment, innovation and determination.

This meeting provides an excellent opportunity for us to review the progress that has been made with respect to the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and to renew our commitment to the fight against this disease.

Indeed, much progress has been made since the 2001 Special Session. The recent UNAIDS report gives us hope, but we do not have reason for complacency; HIV/AIDS continues to devastate individuals, families and communities throughout the world and remains one of the dominant issues of our time.

It is undeniable that stigma and discrimination, human rights abuses and gender inequalities are exacting an undue burden of HIV/AIDS on women and girls, as well as the most vulnerable persons. The promotion and protection of gender equality and human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, must be at the core of an effective response to HIV/AIDS. We must make every effort to eliminate the gender inequalities that are increasing women's and girls' risks and vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS, and we must confront and address the human rights abuses that both fuel the pandemic and follow in its wake.

We cannot be complacent. We need to reach everyone in need with the complete continuum of prevention, care and treatment interventions. In particular, we must ensure that all women, girls and those most vulnerable have full access to this continuum – including education; services and commodities needed to prevent HIV infection; voluntary counselling and testing with informed consent and confidential results; and treatment.

By 2010 as many as 25 million children will have lost one or both parents — and this is emerging as the dominant child rights and protection issue in many parts of the developing world. Infected and affected children face discrimination and stigma, withdrawal from school, abuse and lack of access to health services. Special attention must be given to supporting communities in dealing with children, especially those heading households. This includes providing full access to education, social, health and other prevention services.

At the 2005 World Summit, the international community committed to develop and implement a package of HIV prevention, care and treatment and are committed to working with our international partners to make rapid progress toward the goal of "universal access."

If we are going to meet this challenge, we must build on and scale up that which we know works, notably access to male and female condoms, information and education, including comprehensive sex education – especially for youth – harm-reduction and prevention of mother to child transmission. We must ensure that our efforts to scale up both treatment and prevention are effectively integrated and complement efforts to significantly strengthen health systems and address health human resource issues. We also know that we must ensure these efforts are embedded in strong national plans and strategies.

It is equally important that we continue research and development into new and more effective tools for HIV prevention, care and treatment, such as AIDS vaccines, female-controlled prevention methods such as microbicides, and the development of treatment formulations for children.

Canada is committed to playing a leading role in the global response to HIV/AIDS and in ensuring that it is comprehensive, integrated, and based on human rights, sound knowledge and public health evidence. Since 2000, we have committed more than \$800 million to combat this disease. This includes our recent contribution of \$250 million in support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which brings our total commitment to the Fund to nearly \$550 million. Additional support includes \$100 million to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization's 3 by 5 Initiative.

We have also supported country-led responses to HIV/AIDS and continue to work with our developing country partners to develop, fund and implement comprehensive and effective national plans. Canada has been supportive of the active involvement of civil society including people living with HIV/AIDS in the development and implementation of policies and programs that affect their lives. I am proud to say that the Canadian delegation to this meeting includes two civil society representatives.

In Canada, we are making progress in meeting the targets set forth in the Declaration of Commitment and are working to ensure our efforts address the specific needs of those most vulnerable to HIV infection. The Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada is built on partnerships with civil society at all levels. It also will continue to use human rights and health determinant-based approaches to HIV/AIDS so that the root causes of the epidemic can be addressed and overcome.

In my capacity as co-chair of the Leadership Committee, I'm pleased to inform you that in August of this year, Canada is hosting the sixteenth International AIDS Conference in Toronto. The theme of this conference is "Time to Deliver," which I believe sums up very well the current state of our efforts. We have all made strong commitments to bring an end to this horrible pandemic. It is time to deliver on those commitments, and I hope to see many of you there.

Thank you.