

**S U O M I**



**F I N L A N D**

**High-level meeting of the progress  
achieved in realizing the targets set out  
in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV / AIDS  
Twenty-sixth special session  
86<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of General Assembly  
UNITED NATIONS  
New York, 2 June 2006**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MS. TERTTU SAVOLAINEN**

**STATE SECRETARY OF HEALTH**

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH OF FINLAND**

**New York, 2 June 2006**

**PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 222 • New York, NY 10017

Tel: (212) 355-2100 • Fax (212) 759-6156

E-mail: sanomat.yke@formin.fi • Website: [www.un.int/finland](http://www.un.int/finland)

Mr. President, honourable Heads of State and Ministers, dear colleagues

We extend our support to the European Union statement as presented by the Austrian Presidency and commend the International Community for having made some significant advances since the Declaration of Commitment was adopted.

We wish to express our appreciation to UNAIDS and its cosponsors for their extremely important work and the results achieved. According to the report by the Secretary General (A/60/736), more resources are available than ever before.

We have unfortunately failed in an essential area: prevention of new HIV/AIDS infections, especially among young people. Finland, as the upcoming European Union Presidency, urges the international community to put a renewed and strong emphasis on HIV prevention. It should take into account gender equality and human rights, and make extra efforts to reach vulnerable groups.

We must commit ourselves to put into everyday use the principles and practices of the UNAIDS policy paper "Intensifying HIV Prevention". It is not acceptable to deny those in need of any prevention tools that have been shown to work over and over again. Male and female condoms should not just be offered as the last option, but must be made accepted and easy to obtain.

We must fight the increasing feminisation of the epidemic through the empowerment of women. An effective and sustainable solution is through investment in girls and women's education, as well as improvement of their health, social and legal status. Women must be made aware of their human and sexual rights, and these must be implemented and enforced. A general strengthening of healthcare structures, including provision of reproductive and sexual health services, is an essential element in the empowerment of women. Sexual education should be provided for all youth, adolescent girls and boys.

In many parts of the world, the main and fastest spread of the epidemic is among those who use injected drugs. Yet, they often do not have sustained access to clean and safe injection equipment or to ARV-treatment and care. This must be changed, not only because a failure to do so fuels the epidemic, but because it is the right thing to do.

In the last ten years our national policy on harm reduction has been completely reversed, and we now exchange more than 1.8 million needles and syringes annually. Combined to universal access to all treatment and care, this policy change has had a clear and measurable effect on the epidemic in Finland.

Mr President,

We must recommit ourselves to the goals and objectives of the Declaration of Commitment and even go beyond them. We urge the international community to work together to reach the targets of comprehensive access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care throughout the world. Access is not an option, it is a human right.

Thank you very much