



PHILIPPINES

UN HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS
2 June 2006

delivered by
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Secretary of the Philippine Department of Health
And Head of Philippine Delegation

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Mr. President,

The Philippines is pleased to be part of this global assembly to review the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and to ensure the continuing engagement of world leaders in a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS.

Despite a low prevalence rate in the Philippines, an increasing threat of a full-blown epidemic prevails. Our presence here today affirms our steadfast commitment to secure the gains of 22 years of HIV and AIDS response in the Philippines and to address critical challenges.

Mr. President,

Since we affirmed support for the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment in 2001, the country is scaling-up prevention, targeting the most-at-risk groups like sex workers, men having sex with men and injecting drug-users through the Global Fund Project. We are also expanding the program, targeting migrant workers, through among others, inter-country collaboration with our ASEAN partners. Further, we are establishing a National Monitoring and Evaluation System on HIV and AIDS following the Three Ones Principle promoted by UNAIDS; and implementing the second generation surveillance system on HIV and AIDS.

Recently, we have included ARVs in the National Drug Formulary as well as set up a mechanism for the importation of affordable anti-retroviral drugs. Under the present leadership, 400,000 US Dollars have been allocated for the procurement of drugs and reagents for HIV and AIDS on top of a catastrophic package that is provided by the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) for in-patient care of HIV/AIDS patient-members. It is also worth noting that the Philippine Congress created the House Special

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Committee on the MDGs, which initiated the review in aid of legislation the Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998. Finally, we would like to inform this assembly that the business sector in our country has rallied behind the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and has committed full support to the country's efforts to combat HIV and AIDS.

Mr. President,

The effective response to AIDS in the Philippines will require the implementation of the 2005 to 2010 AIDS Medium Term Plan which follows the principles of the Universal Access Initiative. This will entail an efficient and rationalized response to the AIDS epidemic anchored on the four pillars of the Philippine Health Sector Reform Initiative also known as the "Fourmula One." These are good governance, a strong health regulatory mechanism, sustainable health care financing and responsive health delivery system.

Mr. President,

We are concerned about the worsening global HIV situation where 5 million adults and children are reported to be infected each year. There are greater numbers of women and children being ravaged by the epidemic. Greater mobility and migration throughout the world require innovative approaches to enhance HIV prevention, treatment, care and support those affected by the disease. Moreover, the response to these issues is being hampered still by the inaccessibility to affordable drugs and reagents, particularly in developing and least developed countries.

In this regard, my delegation hopes that this high level meeting will muster the political will to implement measures and strengthen partnerships at national, regional and international levels to overcome all barriers to universal access to treatment, taking into consideration respect for our fundamental human rights and dignity. Further, we advocate for a paradigm shift to focus prevention strategies from mere risk reduction to a combination of risk, vulnerability and impact reduction.

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Philippine Government, I reiterate our unfaltering commitment to global action not only to stem the tide of this epidemic but to provide treatment, care and support to people infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS. We remain eager to work with partners and all stakeholders to achieve our targets and sustain our response over the long term.

Thank you.