

MISSION OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS



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Statement by Ambassador Yashar Aliyev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to review the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

Mr. President,

Although Azerbaijan is classified as a country with low HIV infection rates, it is currently in concentrated stage of the epidemic.

The Government has undertaken specific measures to address prevention, treatment and monitoring of the disease under the National Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS for 2002-2006. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria granted \$ 6 million to facilitate the implementation of the Plan through scaling up HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection prevention programmes for the most vulnerable groups, strengthening treatment, care and support for those affected, and using multisectoral approach to strengthen the institutional capacity of the country.

However, gaps still remain in addressing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Among multiple factors contributing to the growing rates of the epidemic are social and economic vulnerability, particularly among the unemployed and those migrating to countries with high rates of the epidemic. Furthermore, social taboos and stigmatization prevent from having open discussions on the problem.

Refugees and IDPs face particular difficulties due to low living standards and inadequate access to healthcare services, which increase their vulnerability to the disease.

In this regard, we place special emphasis on prevention and awareness-raising programs, in particular among women, young people and those migrating to the countries with high rates of the epidemic. Another important set of measures is aimed at increasing knowledge on sexual and reproductive health issues throughout the country targeting young people living in rural and border regions.

In a more general context, effective national policy to eliminate poverty and unemployment and increase social and economic security of population, especially in border regions to reduce migration rates also contributes to halting spread of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

Ensuring wide and equitable access to treatment requires action to reduce prices of medications and technologies. This has been an important element of our policy to address the pandemic, and we are pleased to note that in February 2005 Azerbaijan with the support of UNAIDS hosted the Meeting of the Coordination Council on HIV infection problems of the CIS Member States. The meeting participants discussed the problems of improving access to quality antiretroviral drugs at affordable prices in the CIS region and came up with important recommendations to address the issue at the highest political level nationally and regionally.

Full and active involvement of civil society is a key element in ensuring effective response. Participation of and continued dialogue with NGOs, religious and community leaders as well as people living with HIV/AIDS and groups at risk in elaboration and implementation of relevant policies and programs plays crucial role in ensuring their efficiency and reaching national and international targets.

Furthermore, eliminating stigma and discrimination is of paramount importance in addressing the pandemic, and we believe international organizations can play more active role in assisting countries in their efforts to overcome challenges arising from persisting discriminatory stereotypes.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we would like to commend UNAIDS led by Dr. Peter Piot, and the Cosponsors for their continued leadership in helping the world to prevent new HIV infections, ensure care for those affected and mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Thank you.