

CHILE

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**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE, DR. MARIA SOLEDAD BARRIA**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York , 2 June 2006

Mr. President, Distinguished Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the delegation of Chile, composed of government representatives, persons living with HIV, social and nongovernmental organizations and scientific societies, I commend the effort made by the Member States of this Organization to refocus the global debate on the important topic of HIV/AIDS, as a commitment of mankind.

Five years ago, in this same hall, the Member States heeded the appeal from the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and entered into a covenant: that we would spare no effort to reverse this pandemic still afflicting millions of people all over the world.

Today, as we meet here to review these commitments, we find that substantial progress has been made with regard to many of them, but they have not been sufficient to contain the epidemic.

It is in this pandemic, Mr. President, that we recognize great part of the inequities and inequalities present in the world, especially those linked to poverty, hunger, discriminations of gender and others alike. This pandemic affects the poorest countries and in all of them there is a major vulnerability of young populations, women, men who have sex with men, migrants and refugees, among others.

This epidemic affects the most vulnerable populations and countries, where it is harder to obtain access to effective prevention and treatment or where these don't exist at all.

Despite the difficulties inherent in processes in which differing interests, values, cultural and economic positions clash, this Assembly voices the commitment of mankind to halt the HIV/AIDS epidemic and promote the rights and improve the quality of life of our peoples.

There is a need for more decisive involvement of relevant social stakeholders to achieve the goals. We must enhance and expand cooperation between governments and civil society. This must be made a cross-cutting topic in the various government sectors and the private sector must make a greater commitment.

We require strategic alliances for achieving progress in the solution of the problems affecting our societies, in order to create health policies appropriate for the epidemiological, social and cultural realities of the various countries. There is a need of national and international policies for the promotion of human development and solidarity, recognizing diversity as a cultural asset.

For our Government, unconditional respect for the human rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS and of the most vulnerable population is not only a duty of the State but also a requirement for progress in controlling the epidemic and fulfilling the ethical requirement of an increasingly democratic society. We must therefore create legal and political conditions for the protection and promotion of the human rights of the population, particularly of persons most vulnerable to HIV infection.

My Government welcomes the creation of collective forums and initiatives based in solidarity for the joining of efforts and resources, which considerably enhance action to reduce the huge economic gap in responding to HIV that exists between the industrialized world and the countries with fewer resources.

We therefore very much appreciate the appeal made here for the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In conjunction with national efforts, the Fund has promoted a clearer response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

We also participate in a number of collaborative efforts directed towards more accessible treatments, for example, regarding the price of the medications, therefore benefiting the poorest countries and populations.

We also take note of the commitment of the Rio Group, of the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group of Latin America and the Caribbean on HIV/AIDS and of the leading agencies in this area (WHO, PAHO, UNAIDS), pursuing the goals and targets to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment and care, which emphasize the advisability of and the vital need for more decisive interventions and actions to tackle this problem.

I also wish to state that Chile reaffirms its commitment to continue working to halt the spread of AIDS in our country, to cooperate at the international and regional level and thus to promote the attainment of the Millennium Goals and of the targets agreed in this important Assembly.

Finally, Mr. President, it is time to intensify efforts to obtain a more effective response. Many children, women and men have their gaze fixed on us: we cannot and must not let them down.

Thank you.