



# **I T A L Y**

**Statement by**

**H.E. Ambassador Marcello Spatafora**

**Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations**

**at the**

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*Check Against Delivery*

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We still have a long way to go.

This is the message that has emerged loud and clear from these two days of reflection and sharing of experiences. This is also the reason why Italy has chosen to speak not only through the European Union, whose statement we fully endorse, but also in a national capacity.

The starting point for the fight against HIV/AIDS is the recognition of the fundamental human rights of people infected and affected, especially women, young people, and children. At the same time, we must acknowledge that for a strategy to be effective, it will take a strong financial commitment to fully funding the response, both by scaling up resources and by better utilizing the money invested in this struggle.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the twenty-five-year history of combating the disease it is that the front-line of the battle is to strengthen the health care system in the hardest-hit countries. This is a strategy that Italy endorses whole-heartedly.

Italy's action against HIV/AIDS has been marked, from the outset, by its investment in human and financial resources to strengthen the health care systems of developing countries, for the purpose of increasing their capacity to counter the spread of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, as well as to deliver all the necessary health services to the population. In other words, the resources mobilized for specific illnesses must be used also to improve and expand health care systems as a whole.

In this context, Italy recognizes the importance of working in coordination with all the partners, both inside and outside the countries, establishing broad partnerships that guarantee the full participation of civil society, affected communities, and the private sector in delivering an effective response to the pandemic.

It has become increasingly clear in this ongoing struggle that a comprehensive approach must be taken, if we are to meet the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care, and support by the year 2010, through the establishment of adequately-resourced national action plans. In the process, and to make action more effective, Italy is promoting national

ownership and leadership on the part of the developing countries, in line with the principles of harmonization and coordination.

In addition to these strategies, Italy is paying special attention to the funding of research for the development of new prevention tools such as vaccines, including through the initiative known as "Advanced Market Commitments."

Allow me to recall that over the course of the past five years, Italy has steadily increased its contribution to the fight against the disease, investing a total of approximately 400 million euros, channeled through the UN system, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria, and the projects of NGOs. Italy was one of the founders and continues to be one of the main donors of the Global Fund.

Consistent with this line of activity, Italy intends to strengthen its present and future commitments also by pursuing cancellation of the debt of HIPC countries, among which, as we all well know, there are many with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

In fora such as these, it is all too commonplace to say that while much has been done, a great deal still remains. Let us make it a point not to confront the suffering of the world through platitudes and clichés. We can begin by doing everything possible to ensure that our declaration does not turn into an empty promise, as Ms. Nkhensani Mavasa, deputy chairperson of the Treatment Action Campaign, so poignantly implored us in her deeply-moving address. If we are to have any chance at wiping this terrible scourge from the face of the planet, then we must ensure that the declaration is followed up by strong, concrete and effective action in the field.

Italy is committed to doing its part for as long as it takes, in the certainty and the hope that its efforts, together with those of its partners, will help to contrast and finally overcome this threat to all humanity.

Thank you for your attention.