



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
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High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS
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Mr. President,

It has been twenty-five years since the illnesses that have come to be called AIDS were first detected. Efforts over the last two and a half decades have demonstrated that treatment and prevention do yield results. However, there are still daunting challenges ahead of us. Forty million people are living with HIV/AIDS, 8,000 of them die every day, and there are 14,000 new infections daily. The vast majority of people with HIV/AIDS with a wide range of needs do not have access to appropriate medical and psychosocial treatment.

HIV/AIDS is not only an unprecedented public health challenge. It is also a profound threat to prospects for poverty reduction, childhood survival rates and economic development. Statistics show that AIDS is the world's leading cause of premature death among people aged 15 to 59, especially in developing countries. The very foundations of society, governance and national security are being eroded by HIV/AIDS, with social and economic repercussions not only for the population of a country but also their neighbors.

We do not need to discuss what we ought to do to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The steps we need to take were already clearly set out in the 2001 *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*.

What we need is concerted action and greater resources. Learning from our successes and failures in a quarter century of fighting HIV/AIDS, we should prioritize our goals, focusing on areas in which there is an urgent need, while expanding aid resources and devising efficient methods for their delivery and utilization.

Prevention is a key response to an epidemic. This is particularly so in the case of HIV/AIDS where there is neither a cure nor a vaccine. We need to make the expansion of HIV/AIDS education and awareness programs a policy priority, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and young people. Such programs should teach not only about the disease itself but also about its socio-economic dimension, including the importance of the human rights and the social integration of those who have HIV/AIDS.

The Republic of Korea is a country with a low HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. It appears in less than 0.1% of the total population (4,021 as of March 2006). However, with the rate of new infections rising by 19.9% in the last three years and the pandemic nature of HIV/AIDS in our globalized era, the Republic of Korea is no longer a safe haven. In close collaboration with NGOs and civil society, the Korean government has, in addition to providing comprehensive treatment and care to people with HIV/AIDS, strengthened health education and expanded HIV/AIDS public awareness campaigns.

There is increasing scientific confidence that it will be possible to develop a safe and effective HIV vaccine. We should step up the search for a vaccine as well as a treatment cure, while redoubling our efforts to make treatment drugs available. Close cooperation with and generous contributions from the private sector are critical in this regard.

It is heart-wrenching to see already poverty-stricken countries staggering under the burden of HIV/AIDS cases. Their goals on the road towards economic development become even further out of reach due to decreasing workforce resulting from premature deaths from HIV/AIDS. In this era of globalization and co-existence, we should expand comprehensive assistance to the least developed countries in Africa. A combined development assistance strategy that incorporates HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention must be sought to break the vicious cycle of pandemic and under-development. Success in the fight against HIV/AIDS is imperative in its own right, as well as for the attainment of the other Millennium Development Goals.

Greater financial and human resources are needed to reach our goal of a future world freed from the grip of HIV/AIDS. In this regard, the government of the Republic of Korea is pleased to announce a 10 million US dollar contribution to the Global Fund for the 2007-2009 term. We do so in honor of our compatriot, the late Dr. Lee Jong-wook, who so ably led the WHO in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases. His untimely death is a tremendous loss that all Koreans deeply mourn. And we are touched by and grateful for the outpouring of sympathy from around the world.

The Korean government fully acknowledges the focused leadership and efforts the UN has exerted in tackling HIV/AIDS issues. I believe this year's high-level meeting will generate fresh momentum to reaffirm our commitment and renew our efforts in the war against HIV/AIDS. The Republic of Korea will continue to work with other nations to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and to reduce the suffering and save the lives of people who have HIV/AIDS. Thank you.