



Statement

By

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High -level Meeting

Of the General Assembly on HIWAIDS

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**Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
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Mr. President,

Let me first thank you for presiding over our meeting today and also thank the Secretary - General and the Secretariat for their relentless efforts to ensure the success of this High Level meeting.

The latest statistics showed that there is still a high rate of increase in the number of new HIV/AIDS infections which is consequently imposing a high burden on the capability of development in many countries as well as creating a threat to others in the form of human social and economic disasters.

It shows that it exist indicators on the progress of this disease in the MENA region and Lebanon as a part of this region similar to those countries under the burden of high prevalence of infection at the beginning of the epidemic.

Though current reported and estimated figures are still showing a low prevalence of the disease in the MENA region we are noticing increasing number of new infections in the last few years despite all efforts made nationally and regionally which is requiring a higher level of caution and necessitating a search for newer methods and tools to fight this danger.

Lebanon was among the pioneer countries in responding to the declaration of commitment after UNGASS 2001, and had achieved a great number of targets put and in an optimal time frame, among these we can list few important achievements:

- 1- A National Strategic Plan to fight HIV/AIDS was put with its operational plan to be implemented in a five years period
- 2- Achieving a universal access to care and treatment reflecting primarily a 100% free ARV provision to all patients eligible for treatment.
- 3- Increased collaboration between the public, private and NGO's sectors especially in the field of increasing awareness and education which reflected itself in an increased coverage to more target groups especially the high risk groups, the youth and women.

Mr. President,

Lebanon is currently under the influence of a hard economic crisis which hinder its ability to achieve many targets in its future plans and this reflects naturally on the strategic plan for HIV/AIDS.

Despite efforts put by the government to mobilize national resources it remains not adequate and external support at this stage is still needed. Unfortunately Lebanon remains not eligible for a support from the global fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria being classified as a high middle income country. But the reality is not as such, Lebanon is under a high national dept reaching a level beyond thirty five billion Dollars which if taken into consideration brings down its adjusted GDP into the lowest level of countries income, and if Lebanon succeeds in having a Global Fund support he will be able to ensure the continuity of the activities planned in the NSP while working on stabilizing the financial and economic situation in the country.

The UN Theme group on HIV/AIDS plays a positive and efficient role in coordination of activities of its agencies members by putting a unified yearly action plan in line with the NSP.

On the other hand UNAIDS and its inter country team are working actively to assist the MENA countries and their National AIDS Programs technically and in all fields specially in awareness, prevention and to build their staff capacities and the capacities of NGO's and other civil societies staff The ICT played an important role as well in facilitating the creation of networks between national NGO's and NGO's from other countries of the MENA region. This success in work pushed these countries to ask UNAIDS to increase its presence in the region by making available more human and financial resources to strengthen this presence which ultimately will create a better cooperation and coordination between the countries, UNAIDS and other agencies of the UN.

In fact the recommendations made in the latest meeting organized by WHO and UNAIDS for the MENA region stressed on the importance of increasing this presence starting with the creation of new posts for UNAIDS coordinators in each country of the region.

Mr. President,

We hear by confirm the will of our country to meet its obligation in achieving the targets of the declaration of commitment put at UNGASS 2001, we commit ourselves to the recommendations that will be issued after this meeting.

Thank you.