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**NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS**



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**UN SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV AND AIDS**

**STATEMENT BY**

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NEW ZEALAND MINISTER OF HEALTH**

**FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2006**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Mr President

Five years ago we agreed a comprehensive strategy in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

Five years later we must take a hard look at our progress.

Mr President

We have fallen short.

We must acknowledge that our lack of progress has cost lives and will cost more.

If a young girl is vulnerable to the sexual advances of an infected adult – the virus wins.

If people with the virus are victimised, blamed and banished from their families and communities – the virus wins.

If young people don't have access to condoms and drug users don't have access to clean needles – the virus wins.

If women are not given equality with men, and cannot control their sexual and reproductive lives free from violence - the virus wins.

If the existence of men who have sex with men and transgender people is denied, the virus wins.

If we ignore the expertise of those who are living with HIV in formulating our response – the virus wins.

If we fail to address the issues of poverty – it will win.

If we fail as global leaders to see this as a global challenge – it will win.

Mr President - this virus is winning.

What we must provide is global leadership. It is a matter of deep regret to us that fundamental strategies for beating the pandemic continue to be controversial. Mr President, there should have been no re-litigation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment. That re-litigation has diverted us from action.

Since we met five years ago, New Zealand has had to adapt as we have faced unexpected increases in HIV infection rates. This has only been possible through working in close partnership with our most at-risk communities, which include people living with HIV, men having sex with men and, more recently, migrant and refugee communities.

Mr President

*The developing world is bearing the brunt, and women and young people are increasingly and disproportionately affected.* We are concerned to see the disease spread through our region, reaching epidemic levels in PNG. Neighbouring Pacific Islands are at very high risk. Today I ask all States to note this alarming trend, as New Zealand reaffirms our commitment to the Pacific Islands region.

Mr President

HIV and AIDS is not just a health issue. It is a global development, security and human rights challenge. We must take action on all fronts, and we reaffirm the World Summit Outcome, Millennium Declaration, the ICPD, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

HIV and AIDS touches on the most sensitive issues of our identities as individuals and communities, exploiting the weaknesses in our societies. We cannot continue to let HIV and AIDS divide us.

This virus cannot win.