

REPUBLIC OF POLAND
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



9 EAST 66th STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021

TEL. (212) 744-2506

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Andrzej WOJTYŁA

Under Secretary of State

Ministry of Health of the Republic of Poland

High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS:

“Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty – sixth special session:
Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS”

New York, June 2nd, 2006

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,

On behalf of the Polish delegation let me express our appreciation to the United Nations for convening this extremely important meeting aimed at reviewing the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly five years ago.

The Declaration of Commitment is a significant international document of the highest value. It gave us all a lot of hope and raised high expectations. Today, due to the mobilization of means and the efforts of numerous people and institutions from all around the world, we can recognize and welcome the positive results of that commitment. However, there is still a long way to go for all of us.

I would like to underline how important for Poland it is to see such a big number of non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives participating in this session. We need to pay tribute to them for their outstanding contribution to our common efforts. In Poland, more than 50 organizations and structures take part in HIV infections' preventing efforts and educational activities contributing very effectively to that end. Their activities very often cross the Polish borders. Let me emphasize that the cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors was established in our country at the very beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, i.e. 25 years ago.

Poland, a country of 38 million people, a member of the European Union, registered this year the 10 thousandth case of HIV infection, and it is estimated that 20 thousand people more live with the virus unknowingly.

The institutional system established in our country guarantees a continuity of financing of both: preventive actions and the ARV therapy. In accordance with the Three Ones principles, whose promotion Poland welcomes very much, since 1996 a multisectoral program of combating HIV/AIDS has been run and coordinated by the National AIDS Center, a governmental structure under the auspices of the Minister of Health. It is the interdisciplinary program adopted by the Council of Ministers and implemented on all administrative levels. NGOs and the associations of people living with HIV/AIDS take a substantial part in its extending and further developing. The Polish HIV/AIDS National Policy is based on the rule of an inherent human dignity and respect for human rights and it provides a better quality of life for the people living with HIV/AIDS as well as a higher social awareness of the issue.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman,

While making a review of the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment, one of the leading topic is the access to therapy and its complete monitoring for all people in need.

The antiretroviral therapy has been applied and administered in our country since 1996. All the patients with medical prescription, including incarcerated people and those using intravenous drugs, have access to a free of charge ARV therapy. Since 2001, the number of patients on ARV therapies increased by 100% and now 2 700 people receive free of charge ARV drugs, including on post exposure procedures. During the last 5 years the financing of ARV therapies from the Minister of Health's budget amounted to about 100 million euro. It is worth to stress, that thanks to the strict implementation of the prevention of the mother – to – child transmissions, the percentage of that way of HIV transmission has decreased 40 times since 1989 and now is of less than 1%.

Apart from that, multimedia campaigns are organized in Poland as a part of a social education. They promote not only the knowledge about HIV/AIDS, but also social attitudes and HIV testing on voluntary basis. The consultative and diagnostic centers located all over the country offer the possibility of an anonymous and free of charge HIV testing, with pre- and post-testing counseling. Each year the number of people who want to know their serological status and use this service increases by 20% - in the year 2005, 15 thousand people were tested on HIV on voluntary basis.

It should also be stressed that an international cooperation on HIV/AIDS has significantly intensified within the last five years. The National AIDS Center, as well as the non-governmental organizations take part in the implementation of an increasing number of projects dedicated to other countries, especially the neighboring ones, sharing Polish best practices and experiences based on our national HIV/AIDS strategy.

Despite the progress made in our country in the last 5 years, we are fully aware of the needs and challenges that Poland still faces. The preventive actions, especially dedicated to the youth, as well as financing of those actions, have to be increased and intensified. The harm reduction programs and the substitution therapy have been run in Poland since 1997, nevertheless, approximately 700 people receive methadone, so that the number of the available methadone projects is to be increased too.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman,

The implementation of the Declaration of Commitment has brought Poland, as well as the whole world, countable and tangible benefits, especially well recognizable as regards the decreasing of the negative impact of the pandemic. But we still have to remember, that in each part of the world thousands of people die and children become orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. The discrimination based on the serological status is still a huge problem.

The international community has to continue its efforts aimed at combating HIV/AIDS with a focus on the protection of human rights and respect for dignity of all infected persons.

I am confident that this meeting will further contribute to our common efforts to make the best use of the opportunities we have and let us pave a way to an HIV-free generation to come.

Once again I declare the full readiness of Poland to continue sharing of its best practices and experiences with those who are most in need and to contribute to the global HIV/AIDS response.

I thank you, Mr. President.