

**2006 High-Level Meeting on AIDS  
General Assembly, United Nations, New York  
31 May-2 June 2006**

**High-Level Plenary Meeting, 2 June 2006**

Opening Statement by Assembly President Jan Eliasson

Let me welcome you warmly to the Hall of the General Assembly in such great numbers – such great numbers that the limitations on speeches have been very harsh, and I ask for your understanding. The size of this meeting tells us something about the importance of the subject and the issues at stake. Today is the day of hearing from you, so I will be very brief.

First I would like to say that we have seen a new dynamic in the United Nations over the last few days. Member States and civil society have come together in a way that has practically never been done before. In both the civil society hearing and the panels and round tables, we have seen a genuine, and sometimes vibrant, interaction between two sets of representatives, two sets of actors who have not had a tradition of working together in this way. For instance, the voices of those living with HIV and those from other groups have been powerfully heard in the halls and corridors. It is my hope that we can capture this new dynamic and make it a driving force in political and social processes needed to achieve practical results, both here, at the United Nations, and at home.

Secondly, you will note that we now have a final draft declaration for our consideration, after many hours of hard work by delegations, which concluded last night at 3:30 a.m. The text of that draft declaration is being circulated. You will all study it, I am sure, but I dare say that it is, to me, a good, substantial and forward-looking document, which I hope you will adopt at the end of today's deliberations.

I am sure we will all want to thank Ambassadors Laohaphan and Hackett of Thailand and Barbados, for their dedication which has brought us to this point. And I also want to thank all the negotiators who laboured so hard to make sure that we set the direction for the future in a way in which we all can be proud.

Excellencies and Friends,

Today we look forward to hearing about your experiences, your plans and your commitments for doing what is necessary to defeat the pandemic of HIV and AIDS. I call on you all in your statements today to respond to the reality of HIV and AIDS that has been brought so vividly into our halls over these past three days, and also to another reality – namely, the aspirations, expectations and dreams of the people of the world for a United Nations which stands not only for security, but also for solidarity and a life in dignity for all.

Thank you very much.