

1 December 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Aids Day**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we commemorate World AIDS Day, let us remember the millions of people who have lost their lives to the disease, express our solidarity and support to those living with HIV, and to families and friends. Above all let us renew our commitment to take bold action to reverse the pandemic.

There are many achievements to be proud of. Thanks to the increase in HIV treatments, fewer people are dying because of AIDS. Prevention efforts are also paying off.

However, these gains are fragile against the many challenges that still remain. Today, millions of people in need do not have access to anti-retroviral treatment and the rate of new infections still outnumber those newly accessing treatment.

There is no room for complacency, and we must do more and better to ultimately reverse the epidemic. This is a clear message for the United Nations General Assembly, when world leaders will gather in June 2011 to review progress made in fighting the epidemic and in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

The theme of this year's World AIDS Day - universal access and human rights - very appropriately reminds us that this is the right of every person – regardless of gender, age, legal or social status – to have access to services they need for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Women and children, young people, migrants, sex workers, people who use drugs, men who have sex with men and transgender persons should not be excluded.

There can be no universal access if stigma, discrimination and punitive laws against people living with HIV or those most at risk of the infection persist. Furthermore, gender inequality and violence against women and girls make them more vulnerable to HIV infection.

The global AIDS response is at a crossroads. For the first time in 15 years, overall AIDS funding has declined. The fragile gains made in the AIDS response must be consolidated. The international community must renew political commitment to stop the epidemic.

The upcoming High-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly will be a critical opportunity. We must make smart and strategic decisions that will remove barriers to an effective

AIDS response. This is essential if we want to reach the Millennium Development Goals and improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable.

I call on all stakeholders – governments, civil society, people living with HIV, the private sector and the United Nations, to engage constructively to make the 2011 high-level meeting a success and milestone. People living with HIV and affected by the epidemic deserve no less.