

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS
New York, 10 June 2008**

Mr. President,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Two years ago, Member States of the United Nations pledged to scale up towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

We meet today to review how we have fared in living up to that pledge.

As my report to the General Assembly makes clear, there have been some important achievements.

By the end of last year, three million people had access to anti-retroviral treatment in low- and middle-income countries, allowing them to live longer and have a better quality of life.

There are encouraging trends in the provision of health services for women and children. More mothers now have access to interventions that prevent transmission to their infants. More HIV-infected children are benefitting from treatment and care programmes.

This shows what political will can achieve. It shows what we can do when we have solid commitment and resources to make a real difference.

And yet, there were two and half million new HIV infections last year. There were more than two million deaths. There were twice as many people in need of anti-retroviral treatment and going without, as there were receiving it.

This situation is unacceptable.

Our challenge now is to build on what we have started, bridge the gaps we know exist, and step up our efforts in years to come.

We can do this only if we not only sustain but step up our levels of commitment and financing. Let us make sure that we do.

Excellencies,

This is a milestone year in several ways. In September, we will meet in this Assembly to review progress on the Millennium Development Goals, after passing the midpoint to the deadline of 2015.

Halting and reversing the spread of AIDS is not only a Goal in itself; it is a prerequisite for reaching almost all the others.

How we fare in fighting AIDS will impact all our efforts to cut poverty and improve nutrition, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, curb the spread of malaria and TB.

Conversely, progress towards the other Goals is critical to progress on AIDS – from education to the empowerment of women and girls.

This is also the year which marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Six decades after the Declaration was adopted, it is shocking that there should still be discrimination against those at high risk, such as men who have sex with men, or stigma attached to individuals living with HIV. This not only drives the virus underground, where it can spread in the dark; as important, it is an affront to our common humanity.

One of my most moving experiences as Secretary-General has been my meetings with the UN's own group of HIV-positive staff, UN Plus. They are wonderfully courageous and motivated people. I am determined to make the UN a model workplace in embracing them, and all our staff living with HIV.

In the world as a whole, I call for a change in laws that uphold stigma and discrimination – including restrictions on travel for people living with HIV.

Finally, let me end on a note of gratitude. This is the last General Assembly high-level meeting to be attended by Dr. Peter Piot as Executive Director of UNAIDS. Let me pay tribute to this tireless leader who has been at the vanguard of the response to AIDS since the earliest days of the epidemic, and who has shaped UNAIDS into a living example of UN reform in the best and truest sense of the word.

We need many more leaders like Peter, in every sector of society, to carry on the fight against AIDS as we go forward. May we all be equal to the mission in the crucial years ahead.

Thank you very much.