

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**ADDRESS AT THE OPENING
OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING ON AIDS
New York, 2 June 2006**

Excellencies,

Thank you all for coming. I hope the fact that so many Governments are represented at the highest level here today signals real commitment to our fight against HIV/AIDS.

In 25 years, AIDS has changed the world. It has killed 25 million people. It has become the leading cause of death among both women and men aged 15 to 59. It has inflicted the single greatest reversal in the history of human development.

In other words, it has become the greatest challenge of our generation.

The world has finally begun to recognize this. Since this Assembly held its Special Session on AIDS five years ago, the response has started to gain real strength.

In some countries, there are fewer young people being infected than five years ago. And seven times more people have access to treatment.

But the epidemic continues to outpace us.

Last year, globally, there were more new infections than ever before, and more people died than ever before.

There were more women and girls living with HIV/AIDS than ever before.

There were more serious warnings that if we don't see radical change, we will get nowhere close to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 -- the goal that you committed yourselves to at the World Summit last September.

If we don't step up the fight drastically, we will not reach the Millennium Development Goal of halting, and beginning to reverse, the spread of HIV and AIDS by 2015.

Friends, we know what it takes to turn the tide against this epidemic.

It requires every President and Prime Minister, every parliamentarian and politician, to decide and declare that “AIDS stops with me”.

It requires real, positive change that will give more power and confidence to women and girls, and transform relations between women and men at all levels of society.

It requires greater resources for women, better laws for women, and more seats for women at the decision-making table.

It requires all of you to make the fight against AIDS your personal priority -- not only this session, or this year, or next year -- but every year until the epidemic is reversed.

I look to every one of you to demonstrate this personal commitment in the declaration that you adopt today.

Thank you very much.