

SPEECH

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Opening of the ICASA Community Village, Addis Ababa

I am delighted to be here at the opening of the Community Village (and the Community Dialogue Space) on behalf of UNAIDS, the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS. We at UNAIDS, recognize that communities are central to an effective response. Communities are the vital links in the global response to AIDS.

We work with communities at all levels: country, regional and global. UNAIDS is the only UN organization that has civil society as part of its governance with civil society seats for each region on our Board.

In a collaborative process with all stakeholders, UNAIDS has formulated a vision of 3 Zeros. 0 new HIV infections, 0 stigma and discrimination and 0 AIDS related deaths.

We have a strategy to implement it with 3 prongs, prevention, human rights, and treatment. Communities were central in developing the vision and strategy, agreeing it in the UNAIDS board and will be central implementing it. We need communities to reach each of the 3 zeros.

As you will have seen in the UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report, we have been able to celebrate gains in the fight against AIDS. 2011 has been a year of achievements and collective action.

The total number of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped by more than 26 per cent since the height of the epidemic including in some of the World's largest epidemics in Ethiopia (our host country), Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

700,000 lives were saved – yet, much remains to be done. AIDS has claimed at least one million lives annually in sub-Saharan Africa since 1997. And AIDS remains the leading cause of deaths of women of reproductive age. Progress is fragile. Ten million people living with HIV, eligible for treatment, still do not have access to it. New infections are still outpacing those accessing treatment. 400,000 babies are still born each year with HIV, mostly in Africa. Scale-up of prevention, treatment, care and support will be critical to success, and the global financial situation is changing the resource environment for the AIDS response. International assistance for the AIDS response has declined from USD 8.7 billion in 2009 to 7.6 billion in 2010.

Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

AIDS responses need targeted additional resources to scale up or we risk missing the bold targets adopted by the United Nations General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on AIDS in June. To achieve the targets, institutions such as the Global Fund need to be fully funded. The Global Fund remains an important and effective financing mechanism for AIDS (and tuberculosis and malaria). Flat-lining or declining AIDS funding will put people's lives at risk and jeopardize recent gains.

World leaders must fully fund the AIDS response. The global investment target of US\$ 22-24 billion is a shared responsibility—of all countries. We must also increase domestic spending. Only together can we secure the future and provide greater and long-term dividends.

Yet, as suggested in the title of the UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report: Faster, Smarter, Better and outlined in the investment framework put forward by UNAIDS, it is not only about the level of resources available but also how it is invested.

To get to the three zeros, we must accelerate smart investments, prioritize the available resources where they have most impact and capitalize on scientific advancements and evidence, respecting human rights.

The Investment framework explicitly focuses on the role of communities as a key part of the solution – communities often bring the most cost effective approaches. The most innovative successful responses often come from communities that are directly affected. The most effective strategies are designed and implemented for communities by communities.

Last week, I visited a Millennium Village Project in Nyanza Province in Kenya with the UNAIDS Board where we saw an example of a community and family centered integrated approach, where peer mothers, male champions, and community health workers, each play a key role in preventing new HIV infections among children, and ensuring that all women stay healthy during pregnancy, delivery and breast feeding, and that their rights are respected.

This includes antenatal care and HIV Prevention services, voluntary HIV testing and counseling, ART therapy HIV for positive pregnant women, and continuing after birth support for women and their families.

That village – and the mothers and children I met there – are the human face of our global, regional and national plans. They gave me hope that together we can meet the commitment made by member states at the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting in June – to eliminate HIV infections among children by 2015 and keep their mothers alive. That is also the vision of the Global Plan launched by UNAIDS and its partners. It was very encouraging to have just participated in the launch of our host country's national emergency plan to accelerate prevention of mother to child transmission.

In addition to the elimination of new infections in children, the Political Declaration also articulated bold global targets with concrete and measurable objectives:

- Reduce sexual transmission of HIV by half;
- Provide treatment for 15 million living with HIV;
- End stigma and discrimination; and

- Close the AIDS funding gap

Governments, civil society and the private sector, together with regional and international partners, must now determine their respective roles in implementing this new global mandate. Civil society, particularly networks of people living with HIV and key populations, will play an integral role in this effort and must be increasingly engaged in the governance and implementation of the response, as well as in monitoring progress.

Civil society has shown the way in the AIDS response on how to mobilize for change – a lesson that many other development areas could learn from. Commitment, activism and energy are what make the AIDS response unique. The AIDS movement is a movement for equity, social justice, and human rights – AIDS is an entry point for broader health, development and human rights outcomes. I am honored to inform you about the launch of the 2012 round of the Red Ribbon award – an initiative, which recognizes the importance of community-based organizations to the UNAIDS' mission.

The award recognizes small scale, other under-resourced, community based organizations which are making a real difference in the grass-roots response to AIDS.

The award is open for nomination from today and will honor ten exceptional community organizations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the response to AIDS

As you may know, the 2011 Red Ribbon Award winners from Africa are with us today. They have designed with their supporters (Irish Aid, Global Fund and the UNAIDS family) the Community Dialogue Space which is part of the Community Village. The Community Dialogue space was first created in 2006 in recognition of the need to strengthen community voices at the International AIDS Conference and bring the innovative approaches of community to the global level. The space also provides a policy platform for grassroots' priorities to be heard. I am delighted of the opportunity to honor the work of communities her in the Community Village as well as in the Community Dialogue space.

The road before us is clear and we can accelerate ahead with smart investments, capitalizing on scientific advancements and evidence and respecting human rights. We must build on the political commitments, investments, energy and activism that have brought us to this turning point. With strong political will, reasonable financial resources and an evidence and human rights based approach, we can achieve the targets.

Today, on this World AIDS Day, UNADS calls upon leaders, communities, people living with HIV and young people to look forward and work towards a world with Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination and Zero AIDS-related deaths.

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UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.