

OUR JOURNEY TO ZERO: A NEW ERA TO LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES AND SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

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SPEECH

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Your Excellencies, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and all of the UN Agencies, I want to welcome you. And I want to thank the International AIDS Society, my friend Elly Katabira and our American hosts.

I especially want to thank President Obama for his commitment to human rights and HIV, and his decision to lift the travel ban. This is why we are back in the United States after 22 years.

I also have the pleasure to announce that the Republic Of Korea lifted its HIV travel restrictions just hours ago.

This conference will stand as a historic milestone on our journey to end this epidemic. We are entering a new era in the AIDS response. We are seeing a shift in the development paradigm towards greater sharing of opportunities and responsibility.

This time, it is different

Now I want you to close your eyes. Listen to my words. *We can end AIDS.*

Those of us in the room hear this all the time. Wear a condom, end AIDS. Give money, end AIDS.

This time—it is different. This time, together, we will end AIDS.

But this opportunity will evaporate if we do not act—if we do not scale up treatment as prevention. If we do not reach 15 million people with treatment by 2015. If we do not eliminate new infections in children and keep mothers alive. If we do not close the funding gap.

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

This opportunity will slip through our fingers, and history will never forgive us.

This moment reminds me of Charles Dickens' memorable phrase: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." Dickens wrote this during another era of dramatic change—England's social and industrial revolution. Today, we are in a similar moment in our journey to end AIDS.

This is a time of social transformation. A time when 34 million people living with HIV—and many more who are affected—are demanding health, justice and dignity.

Best of times

This is the best of times for many reasons. For the first time, we have more people on treatment than people who need treatment. In less than one year, we increased this number by 1.4 million. In South Africa alone, at least 300 000 people started treatment last year; 150 000 in Zimbabwe, and 100 000 in Kenya. China doubled the number of people on ARVs in one year. We have the momentum to put 15 million people on treatment by 2015.

We have broken the trajectory of new infections, with a worldwide decline of 20% since 2001. Young people are leading the HIV prevention revolution. They will help us to crowdsource our way to zero.

Mortality is also declining. In Africa, AIDS-related deaths have fallen from 1.8 million in 2005 to 1.2 million today. One of the most powerful metaphors I have seen of our success is the story of the casket maker in Lesotho complaining about how bad business is, because people with HIV are not dying of AIDS anymore.

I am so heartened that the world has taken up my call in Vienna to eliminate mother-to-child transmission and keep mothers alive. Since then, 100 000 fewer babies have been born with HIV. And Secretary of State Clinton became the first among many global leaders to call for an AIDS-free generation. Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Russia and South Africa are on a strong course to achieve this.

This is also our best opportunity to take AIDS completely out of isolation, tapping into its social movements, leveraging AIDS resources, and using the amazing delivery platforms we have built to deliver not just for AIDS, but for all of health and development. This is the new legacy of the AIDS response.

HIV is being integrated with reproductive health, maternal and child health, tuberculosis, women's cancers, support for people with disabilities and other movements. We must continue, fully integrating HIV into primary care settings, because the shrinking number of HIV specialists is causing a bottleneck to universal access. This is being done successfully in places like Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Two weeks ago, leaders convened at the London Summit to increase access to voluntary family planning. I salute the UK Government and Melinda Gates for this bold initiative. Let us leverage the passion of the AIDS response to support a new social movement for family

planning. We must all fight to protect women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially for women living with HIV.

And let us not forget that the condom remains the cheapest and most effective weapon we have to stop the spread of HIV. It is time for all of us to condomize!

This is also our moment to address the social determinants that put individuals at risk: Poverty. Gender inequity and violence. Homophobia. Poor housing and homelessness. It is outrageous that in 2012, when we have all the tools to beat this epidemic, we still have to fight prejudice, stigma, discrimination, exclusion and criminalization, not only in homes, but in streets, police stations and courtrooms. This is impossible for me to understand.

No country has done more

Now please allow me to pay tribute to the American people. No country has done more. Millions of people would be dead today without American compassion, generosity and solidarity.

We are indebted to the brave American activists who gave birth to the AIDS movement 30 years ago. We are indebted to the people who risked everything to come forward as the face of AIDS in all its diversity: Bobby Campbell. Arthur Ashe. Ryan White. Elizabeth Glaser. Magic Johnson. My friend Mary Fisher. And so many more.

We are indebted to the physicians and scientists who fought fiercely against inertia and apathy to make the first strides toward treatment. And we are indebted to the American faith community, advocating for universal access, calling for justice and bringing care and services to people in the neediest communities.

We are thankful to President Bush, who had a vision. He brought a sense of urgency to our fight, and brought life and hope to millions. And to President Obama, for building on that vision, and bringing the debate around ownership, sustainability and shared responsibility—and putting us on the road to Zero.

The American Congress has made AIDS a bipartisan movement—above political debate.

No time for isolationism

Some may say we are also in the worst of times—times of unprecedented political, financial, economic and social crisis. I am scared for the future of global solidarity. From many places in the developed world I am hearing, “We cannot afford to keep our promises. We have our own problems at home.”

Financial commitment from developed countries is declining. We have a funding gap of \$7 billion per year for HIV. This gap is killing people. This is not a time for isolationism. It is a time for togetherness.

Over the past year, I visited AIDS-affected communities across the United States, from New York, to San Francisco and Oakland to here in Washington, D.C. HIV is having a shocking

impact on America's black communities. It is showing that wealth is not enough to end this epidemic. Stigma and discrimination are stealing lives here, the same as anywhere in Africa and Asia. Universal access in the United States is as important and urgent as it is in the rest of the world.

And anywhere in the world, where there is hopelessness and despair, the stability and security of states is in danger.

A place where HIV orphans are rejected, where young people do not have universal access to sexuality education, where women and young girls are victims of rape and domestic violence, where people living with HIV have to hide themselves, where death comes to the poor and not to the rich—these are not safe places.

But I am not here to bring a message of defeat and despair. I just came back from a meeting of African leaders. For the first time in the story of HIV, under the leadership of President Yayi Boni of Benin, African Heads of State agreed on a Roadmap for shared responsibility, grounded in mutual accountability and ownership.

Around the world, over 80 low- and middle-income countries increased their domestic investments for AIDS by more than 50% between 2006 and 2011. BRICS countries now fund, on average, more than 75% of their domestic AIDS responses. Last year, the South African government contributed almost 2 billion dollars.

Science is giving us an arsenal of tools for treatment and prevention, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis; treatment as prevention; voluntary male circumcision; rapid, home-based HIV testing; and real hope for a vaccine, and ultimately a cure.

Momentum is growing for a financial transaction tax. This can easily close the gap in global AIDS investments. I am encouraged by the leadership of the president of France, François Hollande, who is calling to transform this idea into a global reality. I am repeating my call for a Robin Hood tax—now.

We know how to get to zero. All that can stop us now is indecision and lack of courage. So when investments in HIV are cut, that is a *decision* to let HIV and AIDS continue to ruin lives and damage communities.

When pregnant women cannot access services, that is a *decision* to abandon the next generation to AIDS.

When stigma, discrimination, criminalization and gender violence are allowed to continue, that is a *decision* to perpetuate HIV.

We are at a fork in the road to zero. It is decision time.

My friends, the end of AIDS is not free. Nor is it too expensive. It is priceless.

Let me finish with this thought: Every day, American people go to work. They raise families, and they pay their taxes. Many never see what that money does. It goes to countries they may never visit, helping people they may never meet.

Now I want you to meet two of these people. My friends from Nigeria, Florence and her daughter Ebube.

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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.