

SPEECH

By: Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS

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Mrs President, Messrs Presidents

Young African leaders,

Today I would like to speak with you not as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, but as a Malian citizen, an African citizen and a citizen of the world.

Young African leaders, you have not come here to Libreville to fear for your future. You have come here to help us define it, to give meaning to the future. I am happy to be in Libreville, and I'm not even surprised that we are in Libreville.

Thank you, President Ali Bongo, for your leadership. You were the first African President to bring the issue of AIDS to the United Nations Security Council. You did so because you were convinced that without health, without stopping violence against women during times of conflict and post-conflict, there would be no lasting change. I would like to thank you and say that today's Africa is the stage of a real transition. This is what you intended to achieve and I can testify. In my travels throughout this continent, I can assure you that it is changing, and changing rapidly.

Remember that just a decade ago, the cover of one of the most important newspapers of the world, The Economist, said that Africa was hopeless. And ten years later, the same newspaper said that Africa is changing and changing rapidly, and that Africa is definitely the region in the world where we are witnessing profound changes. These changes are not only changes that can be observed in the short term. These are lasting changes. We owe these changes to you, the young, but we also owe it to leaders such as President Kagamé.

I'm not surprised that you're here. You certainly had the courage at some point to say that Africa needs to choose its own paradigm and that we must develop this paradigm with an extensive partnership — but we must guide it with our own vision. And I believe this is the kind of leadership that makes it possible for us today to have a sustained growth, a growth that is not only transitory as many think, especially the sceptics. Today, we are enjoying a growth that can be observed in a change among the population, in governance, in the financial system and in several other levels such as education, as you have heard.

I would like to say here that this progress is real, that we are not only experiencing it in our economies. Take AIDS, for example. A few years ago, we were told that we could not provide treatment to the poor in Africa. I was still at the United Nations when we were negotiating resolutions, when the drug cost \$15,000 per year per person. We were told: "Africa cannot; we cannot give them medication; it would cost too much for the international community. They would not be able to follow the protocols. This will create resistance..." And indeed were they proven wrong.

Today, instead of 50,000 people on treatment, we have almost 10 million people. This is the victory of global solidarity, but also your victory. You've transformed your health care systems.

Today we can say that we have broken the trajectory of the epidemic.

Today we can tell the world that soon there will be more African children born with AIDS. There are several countries, including Gabon and Rwanda, where we already have generations born without AIDS. And I believe that this is a small indication of this victory, which of course has resulted in change on several levels.

Today we can say that we have not only reduced the price of the drug. We produce one of the best drugs in the world, in South Africa, and no longer for \$15,000 per year, but \$80 per year per person.

I would like to say that thanks to you, science has also completely changed the nature of our treatments. We no longer give 18 tablets per day to our patients. We give one tablet per day to our patients. Soon we will give them one tablet every four months.

This gives you an idea of what global solidarity is about; This gives you an idea of what it means here to involve the private sector, to involve these young people in a true process of change, and not only consider them as passive actors in change, but as true actors; no longer as beneficiaries, but as actors who will certainly lead this effort that is so important.

I conclude by saying once again that Africa without you will never change and you will definitely be the most important resource to help us make sure that we can enter the globalized world that Minister Laurent Fabius spoke about; and this globalized world will certainly need you in order for a new governance to emerge, a governance with greater social justice, a governance with more peace, and a governance where the redistribution of opportunities will be felt every day in your household budget and in your villages.

Thank you.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-

related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

(References at the end in Arial font)