

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO THE HIGH-LEVEL SESSION OF THE GLOBAL FUND
TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA
WITH HEALTH MINISTERS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
Marrakesh, 14 December 2005**

*Delivered by Dr. Peter Piot
Executive Director of UNAIDS*

I send my best wishes to all those participating in this High-Level Session with Health Ministers to coincide with the Twelfth Board Meeting of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. Let convey my special appreciation to the Government of Morocco for hosting the session.

An effective response to the global AIDS epidemic is a personal priority for me. I am therefore happy to have this opportunity to reiterate my support for the Global Fund, which plays a crucial role in mobilizing resources for the response.

This session takes place in a region of growing importance in the fight against the epidemic. According to the latest AIDS epidemiological update produced by UNAIDS and WHO last month, there will have been 67,000 new infections in the Middle East and North Africa this year. I hope you will grasp the opportunity afforded by this High-Level Session to marshal the political commitment needed to tackle this challenge, and, in particular, to confront the stigma, denial and discrimination that helps fuel the spread of HIV. We know that in the world of AIDS, silence is death.

Your meeting will highlight the need for donors to further extend their financial support to national programmes, and to enhance cooperation and coordination within the region. At the World Summit in September, all Member States of the United Nations pledged to implement a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care, with the aim of coming as close as possible to universal access by 2010. Crucial to this scaling up will be efforts to ensure greater financial predictability in the coming years. The countries of the Middle East and North Africa have an unprecedented opportunity to help the international community in guaranteeing the long-term security and predictability of resource flows for the global AIDS response, including through mechanisms such as the Global Fund. I call on the region's Governments not only to review their domestic budgets devoted to AIDS, TB and malaria, but also to assess how their overseas development assistance can be mobilized to meet the global challenge posed by AIDS and other development issues.

Building greater sustainability in funding the response to HIV/AIDS must be an important goal for us all. The UN family and I remain fully committed to working with the Global Fund towards that end. Let us spare no effort in our work to accelerate the delivery of life-saving programmes to the people who need them most.

Kofi A. Annan