

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
REVIEW OF DECLARATION
OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS
New York, 21 May 2007**

Madam President,
Excellencies,

I am grateful for this opportunity to meet with all of you on one of the gravest challenges of our time.

In the course of a quarter of a century, HIV has infected 65 million people, and killed 25 million. Today, 40 million people are living with HIV. Almost half of them are women. More women -- including married women -- are living with HIV than ever before.

Without adequate treatment, all those infected will die. Some 8,000 people die of AIDS-related illnesses every day.

At the same time, another 12,000 become infected with HIV. For every person who starts anti-retroviral treatment, six more become infected.

These numbers are humbling. But even they don't convey the full and true reality of AIDS. They do not tell us of the human implications for the individuals directly affected, for their families and their communities.

That is why I will be meeting today with a group of United Nations staff living with HIV. I am proud that these staff members, in coming together as the UN+ group, have the courage and strength to speak up, to challenge stigma and discrimination, and to work to make the UN a model of how the workplace should respond to AIDS.

But make no mistake: in some way or another, we all live with HIV. We are all affected by it. We all need to take responsibility for the response.

Governments recognized this when they adopted the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS a year ago. They renewed and deepened the pledges they made in the

Declaration of Commitment five years before. And they set a new global objective towards universal access to treatment, prevention, care, and support by 2010.

Ensuring such access is critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halting, and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV among women, men and children by 2015. And it is a prerequisite for meeting most of the other goals. We cannot win the fight for development if we do not stop the spread of HIV.

All four elements of the response -- treatment, prevention, care, and support -- are essential and inter-connected.

The report before you today shows that progress is possible on all four fronts.

Over the past year, important groundwork has been laid to ensure universal access. Ninety countries have set national access targets, and many aim to double or triple the coverage of antiretroviral treatment by 2010.

Two million people in low and middle income countries are now receiving treatment.

In countries with generalized epidemics where there have been sustained prevention efforts, HIV prevalence is declining.

Several countries have made special services available to AIDS orphans, ensuring access to health, education and social welfare.

And yet, the epidemic is still spreading. Over the past two years, the number of people living with HIV has increased in every region in the world -- not least in my own home continent, Asia.

As an Asian Secretary-General, I am determined to speak up about the spread of AIDS on the continent. Every day of denial takes a terrible toll. Every new infection adds to the burden on individuals, families, households, communities, and society as a whole. Every day, prevention becomes more urgent.

Around the world -- including in Africa, where AIDS has wreaked its worst devastation so far -- we have seen many examples of effective prevention programmes. These must be scaled up and made accessible to all.

That means overcoming the obstacles that keep so many people from accessing prevention services -- including women, girls, and members of vulnerable groups.

It means adopting a comprehensive approach to tackle diseases intimately linked with HIV -- especially tuberculosis.

It means investing further in tools for prevention and treatment, including vaccines and microbicides.

It means mustering the political will to address the factors that drive the epidemic -- including gender inequality, stigma and discrimination.

It means ensuring full and predictable funding for infrastructure, human resources, and credible national AIDS plans -- based on an honest understanding of the specific nature of the local epidemic.

It means building partnerships with all Governments, the private sector and civil society, to make AIDS money work better and more effectively.

And it means sustaining these efforts not just for years, but for decades to come.

For my part, as Secretary-General, I promise:

- That AIDS will remain a system-wide priority for the United Nations;
- That the UN will deliver as one on AIDS, and the already pioneering coordination efforts of UNAIDS and its co-sponsors will be strengthened further through system-wide coherence;
- That I will make every effort to mobilize funding for the response to AIDS, now and in the longer term.

If we have learnt one lesson beyond any other in the past 25 years, it is surely this: only when we work together with unity of purpose can we defeat AIDS -- unity among Governments, the private sector and civil society.

I thank all of you for your commitment, and look forward to working together with you on this vital mission in the years ahead.

Thank you very much.