

Remarks

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Remarks for World AIDS Day 1 December 2008

Mr Michel Sidibe

Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS

It is a privilege to share this important day with Madame Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, who has just been nominated Ambassador for the Global Fund against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to protect mothers and children against HIV and AIDS. It is a pleasure to also share it with my colleagues in the fight against AIDS, the Executive Director of the Global Fund, Michel Kazatchkine and the Associate Director of Partnerships of UNICEF, Pascal Villeneuve.

On this World AIDS Day, 20 years after the first one, several milestones have been reached. Fewer people are being infected with HIV, fewer people are dying from AIDS and more people have access to treatment.

However, the AIDS epidemic is not over in any part of the world. More than 33 million people are living with HIV. And each day 7,500 people become infected. In France, some 140,000 people are living with HIV.

I would like to share a story of a young woman I met. Sara was kidnapped and raped at 14. She became a young mother living with HIV and her child is also HIV-positive. She shared the stinging examples of stigma she faced, on top of the struggles she had in finding out her serological status and in getting treatment and support.

As the United Nations Secretary General said in his World AIDS Day message today—we have to end the stigma and discrimination that still stop so many people from learning how to prevent HIV and get treatment. And, we need resources—enough to provide services that will have a real impact in communities and on entire nations.

Madam, I am pleased and honored by your commitment. I know that you will help raise the voices of mothers affected by AIDS, such as Martine, around the world and those of their families.

Your leadership will help build bridges across communities in France and abroad—and you can count on my support as we enter into this new phase of the AIDS response. Thank you for your commitment, Madame Ambassador.

We face complex challenges: difficult economics times come in addition to human rights violations, gender-based violence, and homophobia.

We also live in a time where courageous people like Sara strive to overcome these challenges every day. Their resolve should give the rest of us the impetus to be brave.

The theme for this 20th World AIDS Day is leadership—something we need now more than ever. Something you bring us, Madame Ambassador. I hope everyone here will join me in pledging to wholeheartedly support your mission as we work to unite the world against AIDS.

Thank you.

Uniting the world against **AIDS**