

## SPEECH

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**Date:** 25 September 2015

**Place:** New York

**Occasion:** United Nations Sustainable Development Summit

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### **SDG Interactive dialogue 2 - Tackling inequalities, empowering women and girls and leaving no one behind**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, UNAIDS welcomes the historic adoption of *'Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'* - which is the result of a mighty collaborative effort across the public and private sectors and civil society. We welcome the recognition by Member States of the 'enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power' which lie at the heart of many of the challenges we face as a global community. We applaud your commitment to leaving no one behind, to reaching the furthest behind first and your insistence on gender equality as a force for transformation.

But as we speak, inequalities continue to divide communities all over the world. The face of the AIDS epidemic today is one of inequality and marginalization. Inequality in access to health systems, treatment and prevention, and inequality in the eyes of the law continue to drive the AIDS epidemic. Vulnerable populations such as sex workers, injecting drug users, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, most at risk of HIV, continue to be denied their rights as citizens. Many continue to be the subject of stigma and discrimination and live in fear of government authorities and health services.

Globally, adolescent girls are 33% more likely to be living with HIV than adolescent boys. Transgender women are 49 times more likely to acquire HIV than all adults of reproductive age, and HIV prevalence is 12 times greater among sex workers than the general population. These statistics are not about biological vulnerability. They are fundamentally about power.

But today I do not want to bring you a message of despair. I want to share with you a story of hope. Ban Ki-moon recently referred to the European migration crisis as a 'crisis of solidarity' and that a 'determined collective political response' is required. I want to remind you of the

lesson of solidarity that AIDS taught us: together we can change the course of history. It was people living with and affected by HIV who took to the streets to demand their right to health and who first sparked what has been the biggest social movement in global health's history. The AIDS movement has been a story of refusing inequality, stigma and discrimination, of demanding social justice and restoring dignity to people.

The results have been remarkable. In 2011, world leaders called for reaching 15 million people with HIV treatment by 2015. And that is exactly what the world did—ahead of schedule. If we had stayed complacent, 30 million more people would have been infected with HIV, 7.8 million more would have died and 8.9 million more children would have been orphaned due to AIDS.

But this success has not been shared equally and that is why we are here today. To finish the job.

Achieving SDG Target 3.3. to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 will require all of the creativity, commitment and kindness we can collectively muster. To leave no one behind, we must do things differently. For the AIDS response, we have a fragile 5-year window of opportunity to get on the trajectory to end AIDS by 2030. That means we need to change now. We have tremendous innovation but it is meaningless if it cannot be accessed.

- As long as women cannot make decisions about their own health and fulfill their sexual and reproductive rights, we will not end AIDS nor reach gender equality.
- As long as adolescent girls cannot access HIV testing without parental or spousal consent, we will not end AIDS.
- If we cannot keep girls in secondary school and if young people cannot access comprehensive sexuality education, we will not end AIDS.
- As long as we talk about gender equality without recognizing men and boys as central to this, we will not end AIDS.

The AIDS movement is focused on reaching, protecting and promoting the rights of the most vulnerable and UNAIDS remains committed to doing just that. We must also share the AIDS experience in support of the SDGs more broadly. We must mount a collective response to the global challenges we face that supports people as people, regardless of their legal or other status. A movement against injustice and inequality that delivers transformation on the

scale and scope promised in the SDGs. At UNAIDS, we promise to be transparent and accountable in all we do and to support communities and countries to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 - a journey which demands that we heed the lessons AIDS has so powerfully taught us - **we must unite in solidarity and leave no one behind.**

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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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Learn more at [unaids.org](https://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.