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UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REMARKS

Multi-stakeholder Hearing on HIV/AIDS

Informal meeting, United Nations General Assembly,
75th session

Virtual: 23 April 2021



High-Level Meeting on AIDS END INEQUALITIES. END AIDS.

Thank you,

Your Excellency Mr Bozkir, President of the General Assembly and co-facilitators, Your Excellencies Ambassador Gertze and Ambassador Fifield, for your strong dedication to the organization of the high-level meeting and this interactive hearing-

My friends, activists-the COVID pandemic prevented us from being in person in New York but will not prevent us from raising our voices together to discuss the future of the AIDS response.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Multi-stakeholder Task Force for the organization of this event.

Since the first years of the pandemic, it was the loud and persistent voices of people living with HIV and the communities most affected who accelerated the pace of progress.

I know that communities are uniquely positioned to reflect on the successes and challenges and make recommendations for the future of the HIV global response. We are here to listen and to learn from you.

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for making it happen.

I would like to acknowledge the representatives of civil society, the private sector, Member States, and United Nations, that are here with us. Strong leadership at all levels of society is essential for an effective response to the epidemic.

After more than one year, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world immeasurably. The pandemic continues to have a devastating impact, especially on those most marginalized.

We hope that the sense of urgency moving the world to find solutions to COVID-19 also reignites the urgency to address the unfinished business of the HIV pandemic.

As you've heard, this year marks 40 years since the first cases of AIDS were reported, and 25 years since the establishment of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. And it is scientific innovation, global solidarity and community resilience that have saved millions of lives.

Despite this progress, the AIDS pandemic remains a global crisis. Nearly 700,000 people die of AIDS every year and 1.7 million people acquire HIV. In 2021, every one of these infections and deaths is preventable. We know how to end AIDS.

The world missed the global targets that were committed to in the 2016 Political Declaration. Any why? Inequalities are a key reason for this failure.

It is unacceptable that Africa remains the epicentre with adolescent girls and young women five times more vulnerable than boys and men of the same age.

Inequalities leave key populations facing the majority of new HIV infections globally. All this is unacceptable and preventable.

The struggle to end AIDS is inextricably linked with the struggle to end human rights violations, including discrimination and violence against women and girls as well as the and the marginalization and criminalization of people living with HIV and of key populations—sex workers, people who use drugs, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, and transgender people and other groups like prisoners.

In March, the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board adopted a new five-year Global AIDS strategy focused on addressing the inequalities that drive HIV infections and deaths.

If we achieve the targets in the strategy, we will dramatically reduce HIV infections and AIDS deaths by 2025 and we can end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Twenty years have passed since the historic United Nations General Assembly Special Session on AIDS. Now is the moment for world leaders to commit to getting the world back on track to end AIDS and ensure that the 2021 Political Declaration on HIV is strong, progressive and innovative.

Let us work together, partnering with affected communities, to end inequalities and to end AIDS.

Thank you Mr President.

