

REMARKS

WINNIE BYANYIMA, UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
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WELCOME PANEL AT THE FAST-TRACK CITIES 2022 CONFERENCE

Good afternoon
Buenas tardes

It is an honour to once again join urban leaders, city councillors and conference participants to reflect on the role of cities in ending AIDS by 2030.

Thank you IAPAC and the Fast-Track Cities Institute for organizing this conference. To my friend José Zuniga—thank you always for your strong engagement—at UNAIDS we are grateful for our partnership.

A special thank you to the city of Seville, and Mayor Antonio Muñoz Martínez, for hosting this important event, together with Spain's Minister of Health, Carolina Darias.

We congratulate the network 100% Life for the Community Leadership Award that they will receive tonight. Valeria, you and your team deserve this—you are a force for positive change—connecting people and movements.

I'd also like to congratulate Amsterdam, Johannesburg, Kingston-Jamaica, Lagos, New York City, and Quezon City who will receive Circle of Excellence awards for their achievements in moving the HIV response forward.

Cities have been at the forefront of successfully responding to AIDS, in leading science and innovation, and in bringing together multiple sectors and partners.

However, AIDS is not over, and our response is in danger. The latest UNAIDS global report shows that progress has been faltering, resources have been shrinking and inequalities have been widening. Approximately 1.5 million people were newly infected with HIV in 2021, and 650 000 died from AIDS related causes. And this when we have effective prevention and treatment options and each one of these infections and deaths could have been avoided.

We are here to renew our Fast track Cities commitment to close the gaps in HIV services, to prevent new HIV infections and avert AIDS-related deaths, by tackling inequalities and the stigma and discrimination that drive them.

Among the lessons that we have learned in tackling HIV is the need for bold political leadership, global solidarity, ensuring communities are at the centre of the response, and a commitment to human rights. This has been true for COVID-19 and will be true for other pandemics to come. Ending inequalities is the most effective way to ensure we are more prepared for the next pandemic.

The Paris Declaration on ending AIDS in Cities; the Global AIDS Strategy and the Political Declaration on HIV adopted last June at the UN General Assembly together offer a roadmap on how, together, we can end AIDS by 2030.

This Global Strategy acknowledges the critical role that cities play in the HIV response and emphasizes the need to focus on cities as essential partners and change agents in the HIV response. Cities are best placed to address the inequalities that are driving new HIV infections and keeping people away from life-saving services.

We count on all of you to stand strong on rights and be inclusive in your policies and programmes.

UNAIDS will be standing with you and supporting your leadership.

Together we can end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Thank you and I wish you successful deliberations over the next few days.

