

UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REMARKS

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OPENING REMARKS FOR WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY 2023 SIDE EVENT: GLOBAL HIV PREVENTION COALITION HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON ACCELERATING HIV PREVENTION AND PREPARING FOR FUTURE PANDEMICS. 24 MAY 2023, GENEVA





Excellencies, Ambassadors, Honourable Ministers, partners, colleagues and friends, good evening and welcome to UNAIDS, Geneva. We are in the Kofi A. Annan Conference Room. Welcome.

A special thanks, first, to the Government of Germany—the chair of UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board—and the Government of Kenya—the vice-chair of our Programme Coordinating Board—for co-hosting this ministerial meeting.

The Global HIV Prevention Coalition was founded in 2017. Its purpose is to strengthen and sustain political commitment and accountability for delivering prevention services at scale.

While the Coalition's focus was initially on the 28 countries that had high HIV incidence, this evening I am pleased and honoured to **welcome an additional 6 countries**: the Philippines, South Sudan, Madagascar, Colombia, Rwanda, and Kazakhstan.

I would really like to thank the governments of these six countries for accepting our invitation to join the Coalition. We are stronger with you.

The cost of inaction and the urgency to accelerate HIV prevention efforts cannot be over-stated. In 2021 we had over 1.5 million new HIV infections. We are **not on track** to achieve the global target, we are several times over the global target of fewer than 370 000 new infections annually.

We are way off track on prevention.

This is not because we don't know how to prevent HIV infections. We do.

This is because not all people, everywhere, have the same chance to access affordable, high-quality prevention tools and because, in many places, punitive laws and policies and stigma and discrimination prevent people from coming forward to access lifesaving prevention.

The reason we are off track against our targets—are the inequalities that people face and prevent them from getting the prevention tools they need.

We must address these inequalities, these structural drivers that increase the risk for some people. And by some people I mean in particular adolescent girls and young women, especially in Africa, LGBTQ people,



and other members of key populations globally. We must reach them if we are to reach our prevention goals.

The theme for this year's 76th World Health Assembly is "saving lives and driving health for all." Indeed, successful HIV prevention is not just good for each person who accesses it—it is also good for public health, for all people.

And, I must add, it is part of preparing the world for the next pandemic.

So investing in current pandemics like HIV will help countries prepare for future ones. I might say it is really the only way to prepare for future ones to be able to fight and win the current ones.

We have only three years to achieve the targets we all agreed to at the last High-Level Meeting of the United Nations on HIV/AIDS.

In the one hour of our meeting, 171 people will be newly infected with HIV. A tap is running. Each and every one of these infections could be avoided and is preventable.

This is why, as global leaders in the HIV response, we must act with urgency.

Urgency to **prioritize, to advocate and make bold investments**

Urgency **to remove discriminatory and punitive laws, and the structural barriers** that limit access **to services and prevention choices, especially** for key populations and for girls and young women. That's why we are here this evening.

Thank you!

