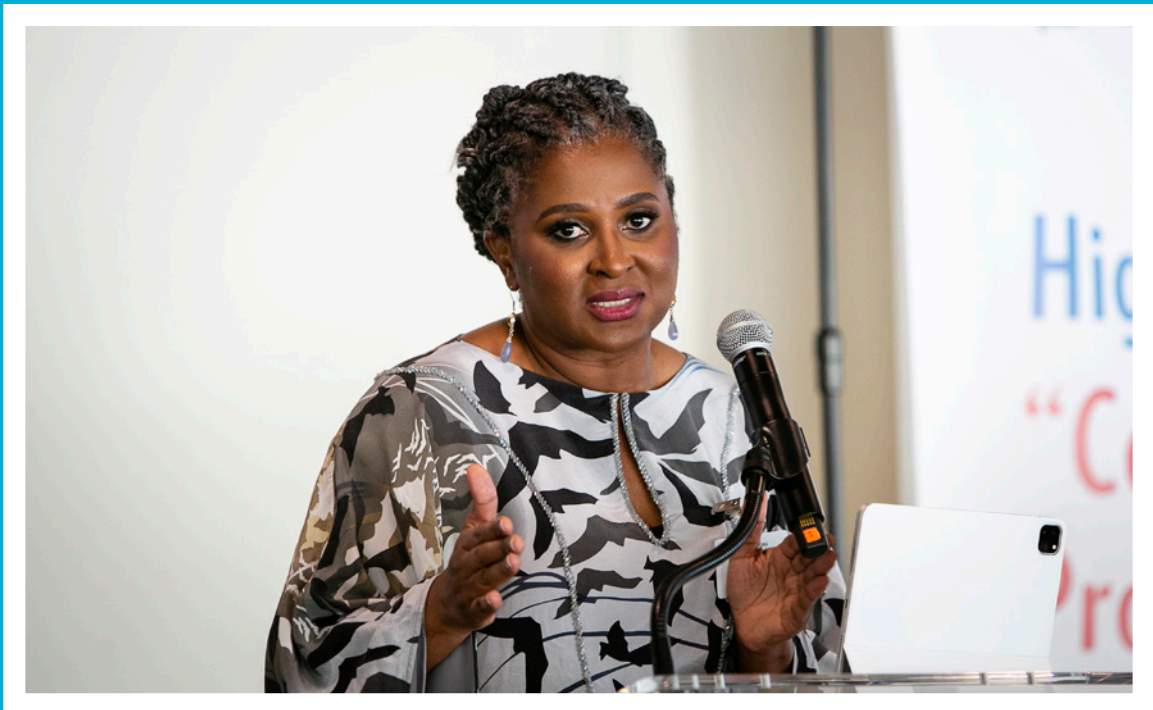




REMARKS

WINNIE BYANYIMA,
UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
HIGH LEVEL EVENT: CELEBRATING GLOBAL HIV PROGRESS TO END AIDS
AND ADVANCE THE SDGS





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WINNIE BYANYIMA,
UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WEDNESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2023

Thank you Sumi.

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, partners, colleagues, and friends—good morning.

Welcome. Thank you so much for joining us this morning.

I would like to thank the governments of Botswana very much, the United States of America, and the European Commission for co-hosting this high-level event.

We come together today to celebrate the tremendous progress in the global HIV response and to advance other Sustainable Development Goals.

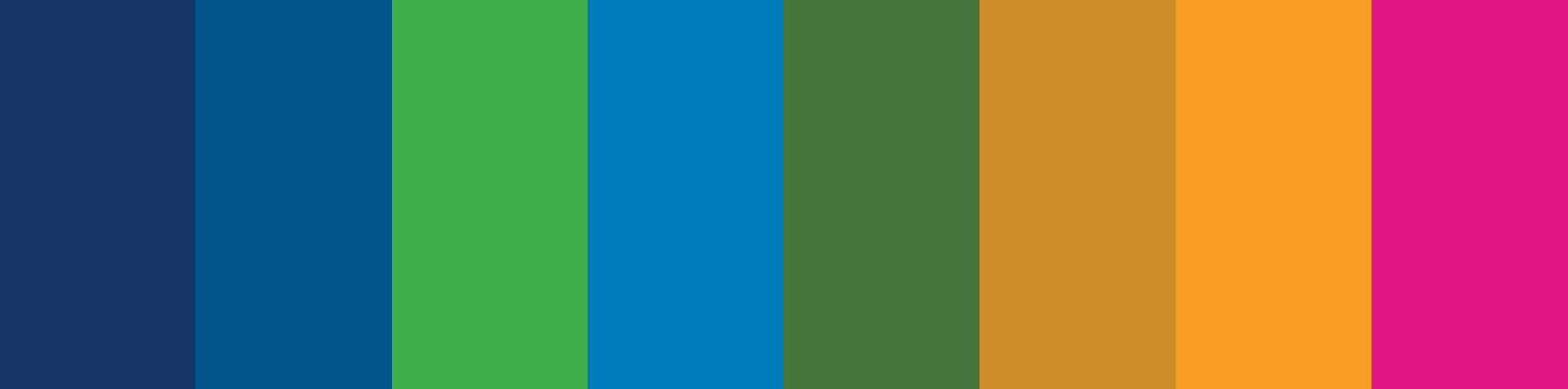
Over 40 million lives have been lost to AIDS. Even now, AIDS claims another precious life every single minute. The AIDS epidemic is not over, but it can be. So, we must also celebrate and appreciate that, amidst the daunting polycrisis in the world today, the HIV response remains one of the greatest success stories of our time.

AIDS-related deaths have declined by almost 70% since the peak in 2004. New HIV infections have reduced by almost 60% since the peak in 1995. This is a huge impact and a marker of the progress the world has made in a time when there is a lot of backsliding.

Today, we celebrate how more and more countries are getting on the path to end AIDS. Though not all countries, but more and more. As we continue to push for a vaccine and a cure, just using the tools and the knowledge we have today, every country can get on the path to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues and friends, many countries here today are on this path. And I welcome very much the representatives of governments here. Many of you, in spite of the challenges of COVID-19, in spite of other challenges you face, you have already reached or nearly reached the 2025 targets, that is mid-way to 2030, and you are closing in on the end of AIDS by 2030.

As we celebrate your success, UNAIDS call on all countries to get on the same path. There is even more reason to celebrate. Because choosing this path of ending AIDS is not merely about ending AIDS; it is about using that investment in HIV to prevent future pandemics. The success of our global response to HIV/AIDS extends far beyond health and SDG 3; it actively contributes to the progress of other SDGs—for education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and the reduction of inequalities (SDG 10).



Today 30 million people around the world living with HIV are on life-saving treatment.

The path that beckons to end AIDS is very clear. It calls for unwavering political leadership by the leaders here today, the sustained engagement of communities also represented here today. We must sustain the amazing collaboration between governments, communities, between the United Nations and people living with HIV until we end AIDS, everywhere and for everyone.

In this historic effort, we must acknowledge the extraordinary contributions by PEPFAR and the Global Fund.

We celebrate the fearless spirit of people and communities affected by HIV/AIDS. Their resilience, their courage, their determination have been the driving force behind our progress. My sister Florence, from the Global Network of People Living with HIV, I am glad you are here today.

Today 30 million people around the world living with HIV are on life-saving treatment.

But there are 9 million people whose lives are still hanging in the balance. Nine million not yet on treatment. And we will not stop until we extend treatment and viral suppression to those who are still waiting.

I recently expressed my heartfelt gratitude to the American people for their unwavering support through PEPFAR, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. PEPFAR stands out as the most significant contribution made by any single country to the global effort to end AIDS. The world needs PEPFAR to be reauthorized to finish the job of ending AIDS.

Dear friends, ending AIDS is an indelible legacy that the leaders of today can etch into history by 2030. It's achievable. You wield the power to save millions of lives while advancing health, development, and pandemic preparedness.

The path that ends AIDS, we insist, is not a mystery; it is a conscious choice—a choice to march together to 2030, when AIDS will no longer be a public health threat. Let us commit to ending AIDS as a reality, not just a dream. And in doing so, let us forge a world that is healthier, more equal and more just for every one of us.

I thank you so much.



