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## **TOWARDS UNIVERSAL ACCESS**

**South-East Europe Sub-Regional Consultation on scaling-up  
towards Universal Access**

**8 March 2006**

**Speech by  
Deborah Landey,  
UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director**

Thank you Minister Eugen Nicolaescu,

Eugen Nicolaescu, Minister of health Romania,

Astrit Ajeti, Deputy Minister of Health Kosovo

Atanas Dodov, Deputy Minister of Health, Bulgaria

Zamira Sinojmeri, Deputy Minister of Health, Albania

Excellencies

Soknan Han Jung, UN Resident Coordinator in Romania

Eduard Petrescu, UNAIDS Country Coordinator,

PLHIV (Name tbc)

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a tremendous honour to be here with you today at the South-East Europe sub-regional consultation on scaling-up towards universal access.

We owe thanks to you, Minister Nicolaescu for hosting this consultation that will allow for this truly country driven process to take place. The UNAIDS family is very happy to be participating in this event and it is also a great pleasure to see here today so many country delegations and the strong participation of civil society.

Thank you all very much for being here today.

This regional consultation is the culmination of a country-driven process to concretize three increasingly famous words – towards universal access.

Last year the leaders of the G8 countries and all countries at the World Summit committed to “developing and implementing a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it”.

In its call for a Review of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment, the UN General Assembly requested the UNAIDS Secretariat and its Cosponsors to “assist in facilitating inclusive, country-driven processes, including consultations with relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector within existing national AIDS strategies, for scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010, for all those who need it”.

And the General Assembly resolution makes it very clear, this must be a country driven process.

These country consultations are driving a global dialogue and partnership among all countries to ensure we reach the MDG on HIV/AIDS by increasing the pace of scale up. These country,

regional and global-level consultations have been taking place for the past few months with a strong focus on identifying the major obstacles to scaling up, finding solutions to these obstacles at country, regional and global level, and development of country roadmaps for coming as close as possible to universal access by 2010.

By the end of February more than 73 countries will have held national consultations involving a very wide range of constituencies. The national level processes are backed up with regional processes like this one. To date, five regional consultations have been held and after the South Eastern Europe regional consultation starting today, the last regional consultation will take place in Egypt for the Middle East.

Also, and as you know, a Global Steering Committee has been set up to support and the country and regional consultations and to examine obstacles to scale-up of those that are though to be particularly of a global nature. This global channel will find it's way into the General Assembly review through an Assessment to be prepared by UNAIDS. And this will also inform the development of the political declaration.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This global dialogue is identifying a number of obstacles to scaling up the response to HIV. These include the crucial question of sustainable and predictable financing, human resource capacity and health and social systems, affordable commodities and low cost technologies; and human rights, stigma and discrimination.

As important as identifying some critical obstacles these consultations are also coming up with a number of key actions necessary for scaling up the response. Let me share with you some examples of options that have been emerging from other country and regional consultations that have taken place to date:

- There is a need for a broad AIDS leadership and partnerships - at the highest level and at community level, linking the decision makers with those who know the reality of AIDS that is emerging.
- In the area of legal and policy reform, regional mechanisms could tackle issues like homophobia, gender inequity, and the stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and at-risk groups such as sex workers, injecting drug users and others.
- Strengthened technical and human resource capacity is needed at all levels - implementation lacks pace and scale to impact the epidemic and make full use of the existing funding opportunities.
- It is also clear that moving towards universal access requires the availability of affordable commodities, both for HIV prevention and treatment,
- The fact is also that HIV prevention and treatment is not an either/or – treatment is an important life saving brake, but not a

cure. The recent EU Statement on HIV Prevention for an AIDS Free Generation supports this in calling for a rapid increase in the scale and scope of HIV prevention efforts in order to get ahead of the epidemic.

We very much hope that this dialogue over the next two days will generate some of the critical constraints and obstacles that you face in South-East Europe to scale-up and that by the end of the year, all countries in the region will have roadmaps that identify and address key barriers to scaling up through clearly defined goals and milestones.

I am well aware that, like the rest of the world, this region faces a considerable challenge with the response to AIDS. The HIV epidemic is very rapidly growing in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; more than 270 000 people were infected with HIV during 2005, reaching a total of 1.6 million people living with HIV in the region (EE&CA). Furthermore, there is a growing feminization of the epidemic, more and more women and children are becoming affected.

The governments of this region can be commended for taking the AIDS issues on board as was demonstrated in the summer of 2002 when the Romanian Government hosted the South Eastern Europe Conference on HIV and AIDS which brought all partners in a concerted effort to scale up national responses to AIDS in the region. The presence today of such an extraordinary array of people

and leadership in this room clearly shows the determination you all have to identify way to achieve these goals.

Overall this is a great mobilization. On behalf of the UNAIDS family I do congratulate the countries that have engaged in this process and look forward to working with you in these two days and in the future.

Thank you