

Speech

[Note: e.g. Check against delivery]

**GCWA LEADERSHIP COUNCIL DINNER
6 June 2006, 19.30
European Rotunda, Royal Ontario Museum**

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

Minister George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-term care for Ontario

Louise Binder, Chair, Representative from the People with AIDS Foundation

Sean Rourke, Ontario HIV Treatment Network

Thank you Sean Rourke for this introduction,

- I would like to express our deepest thanks to Canada for the strong role it has taken in global effort to reverse the AIDS epidemic and for its sustained support to UNAIDS in helping us to move the agenda forward particularly on the agendas of the feminization of the epidemic, and human rights. We also owe great thanks to the City Council, the Ontario Ministry of Health, the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, the Blueprint Initiative (network of organizations working on women and AIDS) for their support to this Leadership council meeting of Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Thank you for your generous support in helping this meeting to take place.
- As a Canadian, I am particularly pleased to be here tonight for this very important event and in my current and recent capacity as Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS. It is a great source of pride that the meeting is taking place here and to see such tremendous energy going into women and AIDS.
- Friends,
Even though the pandemic and its toll are outstripping the worst predictions, I believe that we are today at a true turning point in our

efforts – because for the first time ever we have the will, means and knowledge needed to make real headway.

- Today's meeting has come at a critical point after the High Level AIDS Review at the General Assembly in New York.

Last week, member states of the United Nations General Assembly collectively renewed their commitment to reversing the tide of this epidemic and came together in a strong political declaration to engage for Universal Access to Treatment in low and middle income countries, recognizing the exceptionality of AIDS also as a key to many other aspects development (*nb: get exact wording of declaration*)

- The need to tackle the feminization of the epidemic, as well as stigma and discrimination are now high on the agenda for global action against AIDS.
- The member states also committed to engaging the means for this agenda. Ambitious national targets were set, and the funds that are all essential for the world to achieve Universal Access are being engaged.
- It was exceptional to see how gender and the feminization of the epidemic have now taken the truly prominent role on the agenda that we know will be essential to reversing the AIDS epidemic, and to development.
- As you are all aware, today, more than 17.5 million women are now living with HIV – 2 million more than 2001. Infections among women are increasing in every region of the world. Worldwide, more than twice as many young women are living with HIV as young men.

- This is why the Global Coalition on Women AIDS was launched in 2004 by UNAIDS. The Coalition, is a worldwide alliance of decision makers, UN organizations, community leaders, programme implementers, advocates and networks of women living with HIV.
- The Coalition launched it's Agenda for Action in New York last week (hold it up). Our organization like many others, has now been given the mandate to move forward. We have known what works for a long time now and for the feminization of the epidemic our task in the months to come is to ensure meaningful progress to scale up AIDS programmes for women and girls. If we really want to make a difference we need to do three things:
 1. We need to secure **women's rights**. We must ensure that laws protect women against intimate partner violence, have equal rights within marriage, and uphold their right to own and inherit property and land
 2. We need to review existing AIDS strategies to ensure they work for women, and to expand access to services women need – such as education, sexual and reproductive health services, antenatal care, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and antiretroviral therapy. We need to close the funding gap for microbicide development and the female condom.
 3. We need to ensure the full participation of women in national AIDS coordinating bodies to ensure that AIDS policies, programmes and strategies work for women. And finally, we need to invest more in training women – especially those living with HIV – to be effective advocates and leaders in the AIDS response.

- An important part of this work will be accomplished thanks to the tremendous work Leadership Council of the Global Coalition on Women AIDS that met here today and thanks to all of you in this room.
- Friends,
- This agenda for action will be not easy to achieve – but I am fully confident that we can succeed. The promise made in New York last week would not have been achieved without the work of all you engaged in this room. We really owe great thanks to all of you for your tremendous leadership and engagement.