

2011 WORLD AIDS DAY MESSAGE

National Commemoration of World AIDS Day, Addis Ababa

1 December 2011

Jan Beagle

**UNAIDS, Deputy Executive Director, Management and External Relations
Assistant-Secretary-General of the United Nations**

Your Excellency President of the Republic, Mayor, Honorable Minister, Director General HAPCO, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a tremendous honour to be with you today here in Addis Ababa to commemorate World AIDS Day in a country where the commitment of the Government and the people towards the HIV response has delivered clear results in the form of a steadily declining HIV prevalence.

Thank you for the wonderful dancing and singing – what an uplifting way to begin World AIDS Day.

I had the privilege to witness the personal leadership of H.E. Dr. Tedros, when he chaired the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, where he clearly demonstrated the difference that dedicated leaders make. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Tedros leadership today. I would also like to commend Ethiopia for hosting ICASA next week. ICASA comes at an important point in our collective response to the AIDS epidemic.

As the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, has stated, in his message today: “Heading into the fourth decade of AIDS, we are finally in a position to end the epidemic”.

The progress we have made so far is proof that we can realize our common vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

The number of new HIV infections has fallen by more than 20 per cent since 1997. New infections are continuing to decline in most parts of the World. In sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected by the AIDS epidemic, HIV incidence has decreased in 22 countries including in Ethiopia.

2011 has been a year of achievements and collective action. 700,000 lives were saved. In spite of the economic downturn that has stretched the AIDS response to its limits, HIV treatment and prevention efforts continue to show results. Now some 6.6 million people in low- and middle-income countries, are on antiretroviral drugs – this is nearly half those who need treatment. A significant achievement considering that 5 years ago, only 1.2 million people were able to access treatment - but still a clear reminder that further scale up is needed if we want to capitalize on the possibility to end the epidemic.

Treatment is prevention and synergies between prevention and treatment are speeding up progress. Increased access to HIV prevention services are helping young people, sex

Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

workers and their clients, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and transgender people to take control of their health for greater well-being.

But, we will not reap the synergies between prevention and treatment if people do not access treatment. People who do not know their status do not access treatment. The fact that fewer than half of those living with HIV are aware of their status is a significant barrier to treatment scale up, and hence to the benefits of treatment for prevention. Ethiopia's remarkable leadership in investing in voluntary counseling and testing has resulted in more 9.4 million people receiving HIV counseling and testing in 2011 alone, and subsequent increased access to HIV services, in particular ART.

The High Level Meeting on AIDS convened by the United Nations General Assembly in June this year was a landmark in the history of the global AIDS response. It mobilized unprecedented political commitment, reflected in the breadth and level of political participation. In the resulting Political Declaration, World leaders have made bold, tangible and realistic promises. These promises now must be delivered in every country, every community, and to every person in need.

The Political Declaration recommitments the global community to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2015. It articulates a series of global targets, transforming the principle of universal access from an aspirational goal into concrete and measurable objectives:

- Reduce sexual transmission of HIV by half;
- Eliminate new infections in children;
- Provide treatment for 15 million living with HIV;
- End stigma and discrimination; and
- Close the AIDS funding gap

Governments, civil society and the private sector, together with regional and international partners, must now determine their respective roles in implementing this new global mandate. Civil society, particularly networks of people living with HIV and key populations, will play an integral role in this effort and must be increasingly engaged in the governance and implementation of the response as well as in monitoring progress.

The UN System stands ready to support countries to reach the 2015 targets.

Leaders are standing up to say that an AIDS-free generation is possible and that no child should be born with HIV and no mother should die of AIDS.

At the High Level Meeting, UNAIDS and other partners launched a global plan to chart a roadmap to eliminate new HIV infections among children by 2015 and keep their mothers alive.

This 10-point plan covers all low- and middle-income countries, but focuses on the 22 countries that are home to nearly 90% of pregnant women living with HIV in need of services, including Ethiopia. Some countries in sub-Saharan Africa have made tremendous progress in bringing down the number of children being born with HIV. We need to do it everywhere.

It takes political courage to recognize challenges and act on them. Ethiopia has again shown leadership in doing just that. Services to prevent mother to child transmission are being expanded from 32 sites in 2003-04 to 1,445 sites in 2010-11 – and this is being done with an integrated approach where half of the facilities also provide other maternal and child health services. But there is still far to go, as in 2010 only 11 per cent of pregnant women in need of PMTCT services received them.

On behalf of UNAIDS, and as a mother, I would like to congratulate Ethiopia on the efforts to eliminate mother to child transmission. I am very much looking forward to participating in the launch of the Ethiopia EMTCT plan during ICASA this Sunday, to accelerate progress in this area.

As Ethiopia is showing in addressing mother to child transmission, AIDS is an entry point for integrated and holistic health services. We are seeing services for AIDS and maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, TB, cancer, and other diseases.

The AIDS response has paved the way for people-centred health delivery systems that value and restore the respect and dignity of every individual.

The road before us is clear and we can accelerate ahead with smart investments, capitalizing on scientific advancements and evidence and respecting human rights. We must build on the political commitments, investments, energy and activism that have brought us to this turning point. With strong political will, reasonable financial resources and an evidence and human rights based approach, we can achieve the targets.

World leaders must fully fund the AIDS response. The global investment target of US\$ 22-24 billion is a shared responsibility—of all countries. Only together can we secure the future and provide greater and long-term dividends.

Today, on this World AIDS Day, UNAIDS calls upon leaders, communities, parents, people living with HIV and young people to look forward and work towards a world with Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination and Zero AIDS-related deaths.

Contact

UNAIDS Geneva | Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.