



# 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS

General Assembly, United Nations, New York  
31 May - 2 June 2006

Uniting the world against AIDS

## **World Leaders Chart Way Forward to Reverse AIDS Epidemic 'AIDS: from local obscurity to global emergency'**

**United Nations, New York, 31 May 2006** – High-level representatives of over 140 UN Member States, including nearly a dozen Heads of State and Government, are meeting over the next three days to report and review progress towards achieving the agreed goals of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted at the UN General Assembly Special Session on AIDS in 2001. The 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS will conclude on Friday with a renewed political commitment and agreement on future action to reverse the global AIDS epidemic and reduce its impact.

For the first time, a person living with HIV will address the General Assembly plenary, normally reserved for Member States and UN officials. There will also be a civil society hearing to allow civil society groups to exchange views with Member States. The High Level Meeting will bring together representatives of the international community, governments, the private sector, and over 1,000 civil society groups, an unprecedented number.

The meeting will focus on both constraints and opportunities in implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment. It will consider recommendations on how the targets set out in the Declaration, including universal access to treatment, can be reached.

The President of the General Assembly, Jan Eliasson, said: "Over the next three days, the General Assembly has an opportunity to show the world that it has heard the resounding call for action on HIV and AIDS, and that it will act on it. And act we must. How can it be that 25 years into this pandemic, the rate of new infections is such that over 11,000 men, women and children – half of them under the age of 24 – will have been newly infected before we leave this meeting today?"

According to the United Nations Secretary-General's report prepared for this High Level Meeting, a quarter of a century into the epidemic, the global AIDS response stands at a crossroads. The important progress made against AIDS since the 2001 Special Session — particularly in terms of greater resources, stronger national policy frameworks, wider access to treatment and prevention services and broad consensus on the principles of effective country-level action — provides a solid foundation on which to build a comprehensive full-scale response. For the first time ever, the world possesses the means to begin to reverse the global epidemic.

The report states that success in reversing the epidemic will require unprecedented willingness on the part of all actors in the global response to fulfill their potential, embrace new ways of working with each other and be committed to sustaining the response over the long term. Failure to urgently strengthen the AIDS response will mean that the world will achieve neither the 2010 targets of the Declaration of Commitment nor Millennium Development Goal 6 to halt and reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015.

"HIV/AIDS has spread further, faster and with more catastrophic long-term effects than any other disease. Its impact has become a devastating obstacle to the progress of humankind," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "In 25 short years, AIDS has gone from local obscurity to global emergency. And the world has been unconscionably slow in meeting one of the most vital aspects of the struggle: measures to fight the spread of AIDS among women and girls."

In his report, the Secretary-General states that to date more than 65 million people have been infected with HIV, more than 25 million people have died and 12 million children in sub-Saharan Africa are orphaned

because of AIDS. AIDS is the leading cause of premature death in sub-Saharan Africa. Among the 38.6 million people currently living with HIV, around 95 per cent are in developing countries.

Without major progress in tackling AIDS, states the report, global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty, hunger and childhood mortality will similarly fall short of agreed targets. Countries whose development is already flagging because of AIDS will continue to weaken, potentially threatening social stability and national security.

Since the adoption of the 2001 Declaration, there have been significant strides in fighting HIV and AIDS. In the last five years, the world has mobilized unprecedented resources, reaching the financing target in the Declaration of Commitment by making an estimated \$8.3 billion available for HIV programmes in 2005.

Consistent with the provisions of the Declaration of Commitment, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was launched in December 2001 and has rapidly become an important vehicle for mobilizing new resources for HIV. As of December 2005, the Global Fund had received \$8.6 billion in pledges (through 2008) and had approved 350 grants to governments and other recipients in 128 countries.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa increased domestic public sector spending on AIDS by 130 per cent since the 2001 Special Session. Since 2001, the number of people on antiretroviral therapy has increased five-fold to 1.3 million, and the number of people who know their HIV status quadrupled from roughly 4 million in 2001 to 16.5 million in 2005.

Substantially greater resources will be required in the future to place the world on track to reverse the epidemic by 2015 – \$18.1 billion in 2007 and \$22.1 billion in 2008. The rate of increase in HIV funding appears to be slowing, underscoring the need to redouble leadership and commitment on HIV to generate the level of resources required to finance an effective AIDS response.

“We come to the meeting with an increasingly strong foundation in place to transform the AIDS response from a year-to-year crisis management approach to one of a long-term strategic effort that includes sustained leadership and funding to reduce the epidemic and its impact,” said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS.

At the 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS, world leaders will renew their commitment to issues regarding universal access to treatment, feminization of the disease, youth, strengthening of national health systems and establishing strong national targets. According to the Secretary-General’s report, without immediate action, the global AIDS response will fail many millions who are in the epidemic’s path, and to reverse the epidemic, every available dollar for AIDS must be used as efficiently as possible. Fragmentation, waste and duplication must be replaced by strategic focus, accountability and collaboration.

For more information on the 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS, see [www.un.org/ga/aidsmeeting2006](http://www.un.org/ga/aidsmeeting2006) or [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org).

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