

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 2 JUNE 2005, 10 A.M. NEW YORK TIME  
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**REMARKS AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS  
New York, 2 June 2005**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Four years ago, the United Nations General Assembly met in a special session and unanimously committed itself to addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

I said then that we faced an unprecedented crisis, but one that has a solution: an unprecedented response from all of us.

I hoped that the resulting Declaration of Commitment would herald the emergence of a response to match the scale of the epidemic.

Four years on, the response in every key category has been significant -- in political leadership, in funding, in the intensity and reach of prevention programmes, and in the availability of drug therapies.

But it has also been insufficient. As my follow-up report sets out, the response has succeeded in some of the particulars, but it has not matched the epidemic in scale.

Last year saw more new infections and more AIDS-related deaths than ever before.

Indeed, HIV and AIDS expanded at an accelerating rate and on every continent.

Treatment and prevention efforts were nowhere near enough.

Only 12 per cent of the people in need of antiretroviral therapies in low- and middle-income countries were receiving them.

And while young people -- especially young women -- account for more than half of all new infections, most of the world's young people still lacked meaningful access to youth-oriented prevention services.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is clear that the epidemic continues to outrun our efforts to contain it. If we are to reach the Millennium Development Goal of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, then we must do far, far more.

We know what works. We know it's possible to break the cycle of new infections.

We have seen what happens when prevention programmes succeed -- as they have in Brazil, Cambodia and Thailand.

We are witnessing encouraging signs in the same direction in a number of countries around the world -- from the Bahamas to Cameroon, Kenya and Zambia.

Some of these have managed to arrest the epidemic at an early stage. Others have reversed the spread after it had already made inroads.

And we have seen real progress in providing access to treatment. By the end of last year, more than 700,000 people in low- and middle-income countries had access to antiretroviral therapy -- thanks to the combined efforts of initiatives such as three by five, run by WHO and UNAIDS; the work of the Global Fund; the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief; and the World Bank's Multi-Country AIDS Programme.

We must replicate and build on these successes.

This will require increased resources -- from traditional donors, from the private sector and from the most affected countries themselves. That means full financing of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, as well as vastly increased funding of organizations that provide direct services to those in need.

It will require better planning to ensure that resources are used as effectively as possible. Here, we should look to the principles known as the "Three Ones", whereby each recipient country has one agreed HIV/AIDS action framework; one national AIDS coordinating authority; and one agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system.

It will require greater, better and more vocal leadership at every level and in every area -- from efforts to stamp out stigma and discrimination, to the need for strengthening public health systems and infrastructure.

It will require real investment in the empowerment of women and girls. Women now account for about half of all people living with HIV worldwide -- but they are also our most courageous and creative champions in the fight against the epidemic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, in September, world leaders will meet here at the United Nations to assess progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration, and to chart the road ahead.

In many ways, the task this year will be much tougher than it was in 2000, when the Declaration was adopted. Instead of setting targets, this time leaders must decide how to achieve them. They must decide on a plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In that mission, how we fare in the fight against AIDS is crucial. Halting the spread is not only a Millennium Development Goal in itself; it is a prerequisite for reaching most of the others.

That is why the fight against AIDS may be the great challenge of our age and our generation. Only if we meet this challenge can we succeed in our other efforts to build a humane, healthy and equitable world. Let us ensure we are equal to it.

Thank you very much.