



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

AT

**THE CLOSING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
AND COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE
PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN REALISING THE
TARGETS SET OUT IN THE DECLARATION OF
COMMITMENTS ON HIV/AIDS**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK
2 JUNE 2006**

Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Friends,

With the adoption of this Political Declaration, our three days of meetings have drawn to a close.

I would like, on behalf of the whole Assembly, to thank Ambassador Hackett of Barbados and Ambassador Laohaphan of Thailand, and their staff, for their truly extraordinary work this year on HIV/AIDS. First, they chaired the negotiations which paved the way for the innovative format of these three days of meetings. Then, they set about the work on this Declaration with vigour. The negotiations were not easy, but the Ambassadors rose to the challenge. The world should be grateful to them.

I would also like to thank all those of you who were involved in the negotiations, for your willingness to work together to reach strong agreements, with a particular thanks to the staff of UNAIDS and, in my own staff, Steven Sabey, and of course our deep thanks goes to the Secretary-General with his unfailing commitment to fight HIV/AIDS and all of his staff.

While we have been meeting, over twenty thousand people have died as a result of AIDS. And over thirty thousand people have been newly infected with HIV.

We have been reminded by many speakers today that AIDS is not only killing people. It is killing development, particularly in the worst affected

area: sub-Saharan Africa. Without a greatly stepped up response to AIDS, the Millennium Development Goals will be unattainable in that region.

The size and impact of the pandemic has been brought to the world's attention over the last three days in an unprecedented way. We have heard from the global AIDS community, and people living with HIV, as never before. No country, no leader, can say that in 2006 they did not know about the human reality of HIV/AIDS, about the size of the threat, or about what needs to be done. We have heard from some leaders today of welcome new pledges and new commitments. I thank them warmly and urge others to follow suit.

I talked at the opening of these meetings about the unprecedented level of civil society involvement. What I did not know that we would see was the unprecedented level of constructive and substantive interaction between Member States and civil society. As Peter Piot said this morning, we come from different backgrounds and have different tactics, but we simply need each other. The problem is so huge that no one can deal with it alone. We have to work together. The task confronting us is so great that we need passion, we need advocacy, we need mobilization of efforts. The impact of this interaction has been evident in the negotiations on the Political Declaration which we have just adopted. All my experience teaches me that the last days of negotiation almost inevitably see the weakening of texts as compromises are made and deals struck.

I know that none of you got all that you wanted in this Declaration. That is the nature of negotiations. But I know that, thanks in part to the influence

brought to bear by civil society, the draft got stronger – not weaker – in the final days and hours.

It is worth recalling that the Declaration we have just adopted includes many of the vital points that much of the global AIDS community was asking for just a few days ago.

- Importantly, the Declaration reaffirms our determination to implement fully the 2001 Declaration of Commitment;
- It describes successes since 2001, but acknowledges that we have failed to meet many of our targets;
- It includes several references to vulnerable groups. It explicitly mentions a broad range of prevention technologies, including male and female condoms, sterile injecting equipment and harm-reduction efforts related to drug use;
- It has a clear and specific commitment to address the rising rates of HIV infection among young people to ensure an HIV-free future generation, and it includes strong language on the need to increase the capacities of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection;
- It resolves to integrate sufficient food and nutrition as part of a comprehensive response;
- It resolves to assist developing countries to enable them to employ flexibilities outlined in the WTO's Agreement on TRIPS, including production of generic antiretroviral drugs;

- It unambiguously extends, for the first time, the definition of universal access to include comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support;
- It clearly recognizes the UNAIDS estimate that \$20 – 23 billion is needed per annum by 2010 to support rapidly scaled-up AIDS responses;
- It pledges to provide the highest level of commitment to ensure that all credible AIDS plans will be funded, and implemented with transparency, accountability and effectiveness, in line with national priorities;
- And it commits all countries to set, this year, ambitious national targets for 2010, with interim targets for 2008, in accordance with core indicators recommended by UNAIDS in their recent assessment report, which was itself strongly supported.

Is all this enough? When we are dealing with a human disaster as great as HIV/AIDS, those who say more is needed can never be wrong. But I believe we can be proud of what we have achieved. We have recommitted; we have raised the bar; we have made new, important and specific commitments; and we have put this issue once again at the top of the global agenda.

But as one speaker said this afternoon, adopting the Declaration today was the easy part. The true test of this Declaration's worth will be the extent to which you all go back to your countries and implement it with a sense of urgency and a sense of purpose.

And there are two reasons for us to leave here with confidence and momentum tonight. One is the Declaration, which – as I said this morning –

I believe is strong, substantial and forward-looking. The other is that a new conversation, a new relationship, a new dynamic has emerged here over the last three days between so many of you in governments, civil society and elsewhere. If that dynamics of civil society and governments working hand in hand could be translated also back to our nations then I think we have done something new in these halls these three days.

My call to you now is this: take this Declaration, and take the new spirit and understanding of these three days, back to your countries, and implement it.

I would hope that we can all use this new energy to translate this Declaration into action, to make a difference between life and death for many, and give a life in dignity for all affected by HIV/AIDS.

Thank you very much.