



**Remarks
by**

**H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

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Agenda Item 10: “Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on
HIV/AIDS and the Political Declarations on HIV/AIDS: report of the Secretary-
General (A/68/825)”

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Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to our annual review of the progress made in addressing the AIDS epidemic.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report entitled "Towards ending the AIDS epidemic: meeting the 2015 targets and planning for the post-2015 era." This report outlines progress achieved in the ten (10) target areas, which were unanimously set by our leaders in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

The report sends a clear message. The global solidarity and joint efforts of the international community are yielding significant gains against the epidemic, and bringing about an historic opportunity to lay the foundation for ending AIDS. However, AIDS will remain a global challenge beyond 2015, and sustained commitment and efforts will be required if we are indeed to defeat this scourge.

Excellencies,

We cannot underestimate the global progress that has been made in addressing the AIDS challenge. It has been truly remarkable. Thanks to the advances of anti-retroviral treatment (ART), HIV diagnosis is no longer the death sentence it used to be in the early days of the epidemic. More than 10 million people in low- and middle-income countries are receiving this life-saving treatment. New HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths continue to decline globally. Progress has been particularly noteworthy in reducing the number of children born with HIV and in keeping their mothers alive.

But despite these significant gains, the epidemic is far from over. The number of new HIV infections is still unacceptably high, at 2.3 million in 2012. More than half of people in need of anti-retroviral treatment do not have access to it - with a glaring gap in access to paediatric treatment.

The epidemic continues to impose a high toll on women and girls, young people and marginalised populations at higher risk of HIV infection. Furthermore, new challenges are emerging, such as the need to address the intersection of HIV and Non Communicable Diseases (NCD), particularly in light of the aging related health challenges of the growing number of older adults living with HIV.

To address these daunting challenges, we must now accelerate action to reach those who are the most vulnerable and underserved. We can make great strides to provide effective HIV response by promoting gender equality, preventing gender-based violence and by addressing stigma and discrimination, both in law and in practice.

We must also ensure that the necessary resources are available and spent in the most efficient way, maximising the synergies between the HIV response and broader health and development priorities, such as education, nutrition, health and community system strengthening, and social protection. These measures are essential not only for achieving the commitments and targets set for 2015, but also for advancing towards the ambitious goal of ending the AIDS epidemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I took the office of President of the General Assembly, I chose “The Post 2015 Development Agenda - Setting the Stage” as the theme for the 68th session. As Member States proceed in their deliberations, I hope they will consider the importance of ending the AIDS epidemic as a priority. In addition to the immediate and obvious benefits to the people and societies afflicted, the successes of HIV response can also offer useful lessons for addressing other health and development issues.

The ongoing deliberations on the post-2015 agenda, and the proposed high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS both offer timely opportunities to delve further into these issues. Foremost, we need to take comprehensive stock of the progress and challenges in implementing the current goals and targets, set new ones and ensure strong accountability mechanisms to deliver results.

Having put forward so much investment and effort by all stakeholders – and with so many lives still on the line - it is a moral imperative to seize the opportunity of getting the job done. With continued political commitment, investment and innovation, we can make great strides toward ending AIDS and take a giant step toward creating a healthier and more prosperous human family, living on a sustainable planet.

Thank you.
