



PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Statement by**

**H.E the President of the Portuguese Republic,  
Jorge Sampaio,**

**at the General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV-AIDS**

**New York, September 22, 2003**

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Mr. President

I had the pleasure and the honour of attending the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly that in June 2001 produced the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

Two years later, the time has come to evaluate its implementation. For some time now, AIDS has ceased to be a problem restricted to specific sectors of the population – AIDS is a problem of humanity, requiring the international community to provide a service and to be held accountable for the strategies developed and the results achieved. In other words, we require good global governance to tackle a problem that is a world-wide concern.

Some progress has been made following the 2001 Declaration, in terms of the objectives that have been quantified and chronologically established.

First of all, I refer to a number of regional initiatives for sharing resources, experience and know-how. In this field I would like to emphasise the effort of the Community of Portuguese speaking Countries — CPLP — in the area of technical co-operation and co-ordination of efforts among its members, of particular benefit to the African member States that have the least resources but are the most affected.

I would also like to welcome the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the result of persistent work by the United Nations and in particular its Secretary General, Kofi Annan. It represents a significant step forward in attacking world epidemics and

streamlining access to treatments, while devoting particular attention to the issues of poverty and inequalities.

In 2001 I stressed that access to healthcare should not be denied because of high drug prices. Significant progress has been achieved to make good on the perspectives opened up by the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha two years ago, in order to reduce dramatically the injustices in the treatment of this disease.

Mr. President

The sense of urgency with which the fight against AIDS has been pursued in the last two years must be kept up and heightened in the face of the rising curve in the number of infected persons.

Therefore, I believe this approach of regular meetings to review our commitments and the consequences of our acts and omissions is particularly suitable.

The UNAIDS forecasts are clear and dramatic: by the end of 2002, more than 40 million people throughout the world were infected with the human immunodeficiency virus; if no worldwide efforts of prevention are made, however, by 2010 approximately 45 million more people will contract the virus in countries with low and average incomes.

We are also aware of the impact of this epidemic on the health sector, leading to increased expenses and the need for more healthcare workers; the impact on education, with the fall in school attendance; the impact on economic activities, with the drop in productivity; the impact on families,

with the dramatic rise in the number of orphans; and the macroeconomic impact, with the reduction in the gross domestic product of the countries most affected.

The world must look on this epidemic as a colossal risk that threatens humanity and demands a safety strategy on the world scale. This is one of the most striking examples of the need to co-ordinate our political guidelines and to take concrete measures not unilaterally but in solidarity.

The international political agenda, whilst concerned, and understandably so, with the fight against armed terrorism, cannot forget this other source of terror for the large number of people who, every single day, are killed or reduced to misery and pain by the HIV-AIDS epidemic.