



PERMANENT MISSION OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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**STATEMENT BY Dr. LUIS ESTRUCH RANCAÑO, CUBAN DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN REALIZING THE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS AND THE POLITICAL DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS. New York, 8-10 June 2011.**

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguished delegates,

The HIV/AIDS epidemic, having infected 60 million people at the global level, remains a challenge to the world. No country has escaped its effects.

Cuba, as a full member of the United Nations, has engaged since 2001 in the negotiation and adoption of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and solemnly complied with the duties and rights to face this epidemic that, for 30 years, has brought about pain, death and its aftereffects to all countries. It has resulted in over 25 million deaths, countless orphans and affected homes, and we still have not found a protective or curative vaccine, or had the necessary medicaments for an actual improvement.

In 53 years of internationalist solidarity, more than 150 thousand Cuban healthcare workers have contributed to relieving pain, saving lives, and the peaceful development of healthcare systems in sister nations. To some extent, they have carried out actions to prevent and address AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

In 2004, the World Health Organization, along with five other countries, recognized the results attained by Cuba in tuberculosis control. Today, we cannot say it is completely controlled, for in 2010 its prevalence rate was 7 per 100 thousand population. There is no meningeal tuberculosis, and we are working with the support of the World Fund so as to obtain the indicator of eradication.

Malaria outbreaks that have not originated in the country continue to be a challenge.

Our results in infant mortality, the rate of which is 4.5 per 1,000 live births, reflect the control and/or eradication of 28 communicable diseases.

We can say that mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis is eliminated, and blood-borne transmission of the virus has been controlled. Estimated HIV prevalence among population aged 15-49 years, pregnant women and people with STDs is low.

The treatment programme initiated in 2001 has had an impact on AIDS incidence and mortality, and the quality of life of those affected has improved. Over 90% of the patients who initiated treatment in 2001 are alive.

The civil society has been a driving force, giving rise to a strong activism. Youngsters, women, men having sex with men, people with HIV and community leaders have had an active participation in healthcare centers, scientific institutions, social sectors and community organizations, which constitutes a pillar for the Programme on the Prevention and Control of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

The proportion of population using condoms, mostly youths, has increased.

Our country has developed a high-cost comprehensive healthcare programme together with international agencies and the World Fund, which we recognize and appreciate.

Fighting this epidemic has taught us to find ways on how to reduce the costs, improve efficiency, and develop Cuban technological and biological products to ensure the conducting of the over 2 million HIV tests we annually run and the treatment of all Cubans in need.

Ten years after the inclusion of this topic in the 2001 General Assembly special session, the world has changed vertiginously.

We live in a very unequal world, where access to opportunities is extremely disproportionate. This lack of equality is one of the determining factors of human development.

The poor continue to be the most affected ones, as the insidious effects of food insecurity and economic contraction spread, and conflicts and natural disasters devastate many parts of the planet.

Only a few days ago, the world commemorated the International Children's Day. Childhood is a period of life that marks forever the human development and the continuity of its own presence on earth. It should be the happiest moment in the life of each person in the planet; however, millions of children live in poverty, more than 27 thousand under-five children die every day due to preventable causes, and over 100 million do not even have access to basic education.

In 2006, we United Nations Member States committed ourselves to increase healthcare services and interventions, with a view to achieving in 2010 universal access to HIV prevention and treatment, as well as to assistance and support in fighting this infection.

The achievements made, though promising, are insufficient and in danger. Stigma, discrimination, and gender inequality hinder the efforts aimed at achieving universal access to the prevention, treatment, care, and support in the fight against HIV.

Additionally, the inadmissible rise in the costs and the global economic crisis continue to prevent the achievements in recent years from being sustainable in most of low- and middle-income countries.

Cuba, subjected to an unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade by the United States of America, with unfortunate consequences for the health of the Cuban people, and despite having limited access to medication and technology produced in the world because they are manufactured by US companies or their subsidiaries, fulfilled its commitment to ensuring universal access to HIV care and treatment. This achievement was recognized in the 2010 progress report, and I quote: *"eight low- and middle-income countries (Botswana, Cambodia, Croatia, Cuba, Guyana, Oman, Romania and Rwanda) had already achieved universal access to antiretroviral in December 2009."* End of quote.

The Healthcare System guarantees the access of the entire population to healthcare services, ensuring that the actions reach all regions of the country. Besides, the conditions are created for the development of educational interventions, access to diagnostic tests, compilation of information for the monitoring, evaluation, treatment, and follow-up care of those affected.

The global response generated by this epidemic has mobilized Governments, the scientific community, those affected, social sectors, grassroots activists, and religious leaders, and has brought to light the imperative of eliminating social inequities and injustice and strengthening health systems.

Extreme poverty and hunger must be eradicated; gender equality and the empowerment of women must be promoted; the right to education and healthcare for

all people, without distinction, as a basic human right must be ensured; comprehensive sexual education for teenagers and youngsters must be provided; and regional and global cooperation, in which developed countries allocate more financial, material and technical resources to developing countries, must be fostered.

Mr. President,

Thirty years after the appearance of AIDS, ten years after the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and with only four years remaining to reach the Millennium Development Goals, it is our responsibility to renew the political commitment and expedite a global, regional and country action to halt and reduce the spread of the virus. We commit ourselves to that goal as we did 10 years ago.

Rational and solidarity-based unity and integration as well as international cooperation are the only way to find sustainable solutions and face common challenges of the globalized, unequal, and exclusive world threatening us all.

Thank you.