

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Czech Republic fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We have assembled here to review the progress in combating the AIDS epidemic worldwide. Mr. President, let me congratulate you on convening such a successful and well-attended high-level meeting. The quality of the parallel round tables will undoubtedly contribute to furthering our common understanding of the main aspects of the campaign. I am also pleased to say that we consider the political declaration, that we are about to adopt, to be a comprehensive and ambitious agenda for the years to come.

The Czech Republic is convinced that the fight against HIV and AIDS can only be effective and sustainable if it is targeted at the most at risk groups – in particular men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, and sex workers, and at the geographical areas mostly affected by HIV and AIDS. The efforts must be linked to the development of strong health systems delivering comprehensive health services. They should focus on effective primary preventive measures, promotion of responsible and safe sexual behavior and implementation of harm reduction measures in the response to the HIV epidemic.

For injecting drug users, which is the most affected group in the Czech Republic, the need for universal access to a comprehensive harm reduction package of interventions has been emphasized by WHO, UNODC and UNAIDS. The Czech Republic included harm reduction measures as one of the

four pillars of the Czech drug policy already in 1999. Its main objective was to reduce the potential risks and harms of all types of drugs, as well as the economic, health and social impact of their use on individuals and society as a whole. The last evaluation of the Czech Drug Policy Strategy has shown that the Czech Republic was one of the most successful countries in achieving the strategic goal related to harm-reduction measures – to maintain the low prevalence of infection diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and other health consequences related to drug use.

The Czech Republic attaches great importance to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We emphasize the significance of MDG 6 related to combating the spread of HIV and AIDS in attaining all the MDGs, and the close links and mutual interdependence of MDG 4, 5 and 6. The Czech Republic integrates the response to AIDS into its broader development strategies and programmes. Both on the bilateral basis and in close cooperation with UNDP, we have implemented the evidence-based prevention programmes in some of the most affected countries in the Eastern European and CIS region, where the number of infected persons is on the rise, for example in Ukraine, Belarus or Tadzhikistan.

Mr. President,

The thirty-year anniversary of the first report of the new disease is an important chance to give the AIDS campaign a new political impetus. I believe that the high-level meeting and its outcome is good evidence that we haven't missed this opportunity.

I thank you for your attention.