

Statement by

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Minister for Development Cooperation, Denmark



**United Nations High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS
8-10 June 2011**

New York
Wednesday 8 June 2011

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

The Secretary General has underlined it in his report. UNAIDS' report emphasizes it. And so have several distinguished speakers before me: We need a rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. And we need to ensure that legal, social and political environments do not hamper an effective HIV/AIDS response!

Allow me to be even more outspoken and direct: We can provide more condoms, we can improve communication and information, and we can increase access to treatment. But we will not be able to tackle the HIV epidemic efficiently as long as we do not also squarely address stigma, discrimination, and violations of human rights.

Some countries find it difficult and uncomfortable to talk about human sexuality in a public health context. We often shy away from talking about, what is af-

ter all, a natural part of being a human being. If we are serious about fighting HIV/AIDS and are serious about creating an AIDS-free generation for our children and grandchildren, we need to face the reality of human sexuality. HIV is, after all, mainly spread through sexual contact.

We need to accept that men who have sex with men, sex workers and drug users are among the hardest hit in many countries. If we meet these groups with discrimination and stigma and if we violate their human rights, we will help no one. By depriving them of relevant information, counseling and testing or by not providing them access to condoms and treatment we will only fuel the epidemic further.

This is why we in our fight against HIV and AIDS have chosen to strengthen our efforts against stigma and discrimination. This is why the promotion of human rights is key to our approach. This was also one of several recommendations put forward after a recent review of Denmark's support to HIV/AIDS. The review focuses on Denmark's response to HIV/AIDS from 2005 to 2010. During this time Denmark doubled its support to fighting HIV/AIDS from 500 million to 1 billion Danish Kroner annually. Today, our HIV/AIDS support amounts to approximately 8 pct of Danish ODA.

The review will guide our approach in the years to come.

Overall the review is very positive. It shows that the priorities in the Strategy for Denmark's Support to the international fight against HIV/AIDS have been, and still are, relevant in addressing this threat to the health and livelihoods of so many people in the developing world. It confirms our multi-sector approach where the combat against HIV/AIDS has been mainstreamed into all other programs.

But looking ahead, the review also points to areas where Denmark can increase its impact on the HIV/AIDS response and use the 1 billion Danish Kroner more efficiently. In light of our experience and taking the recent epidemic trends into account, we will put more emphasis on:

- Ensuring the supply and more efficient distribution of male and female condoms in Africa. The UNFPA's Global Reproductive Health Commodity Security Programme does a very important job in this field and deserves our encouragement and support.
- Denmark will also increase its support to prevent vertical HIV transmission from mother to child, by increasing access to treatment as well as improving the quality of services. In doing so, we will be particularly mindful of the

important link between combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

- Denmark will increase its support to the development of innovative technologies. Vaccine development is a high risk, but also a high return, investment. No viral infectious agent has ever been brought under control until a vaccine was developed. Denmark will support those organizations that can identify and efficiently develop the most promising AIDS vaccine candidates.
- Denmark will increase its support to the most-at-risk-populations. We will do this through organizations that can provide information, testing, treatment and care directly to these groups in their local communities and, thus, can make a difference on the ground. And I urge others to join us in this effort.
- Finally, we remain committed to supporting strong national health systems. We must address prevention as well as treatment in a way that includes all population groups. We have seen that political leadership and national ownership are key ingredients to this end.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges that we face are still immense. But based on our lessons learnt and on new knowledge and technology the prospects for prevailing are better

than ever. This requires that we use our resources even better. Denmark remains fully committed to fighting HIV/AIDS. It is a fight we must not lose. It is a fight we will not lose. Thank you!