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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERATIVE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by

H.E Ambassador Tekeda Alemu

Permanent Representative to Federal Democratic Republic of

Ethiopia

**At the High Level Meeting on the Comprehensive Review of
the Progress Achieved in Realizing the Declaration of
Commitments on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on
HIV/AIDS**

New York,
June 10, 2011

Excellency, the President of the General Assembly,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ethiopia attaches great importance to this high-level meeting. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary General for the report entitled *Uniting for Universal Access: towards zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths*. I wish to thank the Executive Director of UNAIDS for his leadership and commitment.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the Secretariat and the Co-sponsors of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the US government and other bilateral and multilateral donors for their generous support to complement Ethiopia's HIV and AIDS response.

We wish to associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Senegal on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. President,

We have gone a long way since AIDS has been defined as a new disease. Due to the extraordinary leadership and commitments of governments, scientists, health professionals and many others, we have been able to make significant progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

In Ethiopia, due to sound political leadership and commitment of the government and the support of partners, new HIV infection has significantly declined. HIV prevention, treatment, care and support have become part of the overall national development agenda and have been mainstreamed as crosscutting issues in Ethiopia's development policies and strategies. The accelerated expansion of primary healthcare facilities coupled with decentralization of HIV and AIDS services has increased access to HIV services. For instance the number of people that has been tested annually has grown from 564,000 in 2005 to 9.4 million in 2010. We have expanded free antiretroviral therapy, and as a result there is meaningful improvement in the survival and quality of life for people living with HIV. There is also progress in the prevention of mother to child transmission. In addition, the deployment of health extension workers in rural areas has helped create popular movement against HIV and AIDS, and active engagement at the community level.

Mr. President,

Despite the progress made against the epidemic, it nonetheless remains the case that the fight is not won. Far from it. This is specially the case with respect to low income countries. Insufficient and unpredictable funding and high cost of treatment programs have threatened countries' ability to provide universal access to antiretroviral therapy. In many low income countries significant proportions of the people living with HIV still lack access to

treatment. Similarly, due to low access to prevention of mother to child transmission services, millions of babies are still born with HIV and many more children orphaned by the epidemic.

Obviously, it is vital that we renew our political commitment and partnership to sustain the progress made. It is critical to accelerate access to treatment to millions of people in low income countries in order to stop people from dying as well as to prevent transmission of HIV. International cooperation and availability of predictable funding have paramount importance to supplement national efforts.

Mr. President

Permit me to conclude by announcing that Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA), will host towards the end of this year the 16th International Conference on AIDS and sexually transmitted infections in Africa (ICASA). The conference will be held from December 4 to 8, 2011, in Addis Ababa, with the theme “Own, Scale up and Sustain”. It is our strong conviction that the conference will serve as an important platform for advocacy, exchange of best practices and scientific knowledge in HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Please come and join us at this exceedingly important event.

I thank you