



## **STATEMENT**

**By Hon. Mr. George Tsereteli  
Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of  
Georgia**

**United Nations General Assembly  
High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS**

**Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,**

Let me greet you on behalf of the people and leadership of Georgia. I am honored to address this high level meeting, which will highlight our achievements, analyze challenges and agree on future decisive steps to be taken in this global fight against HIV epidemic.

Seven years ago the new Georgian government has launched a program of comprehensive reforms aimed at building a democratic, modern state. Important reforms are underway in the fields of healthcare and social protection, which will greatly contribute to achieving health development goals set by the United Nations millennium declaration.

Although we have not witnessed a wide scale epidemic of HIV, still approximately 2900 cases have been registered officially while the estimated number is about 4000. The growth of the epidemic in the country has been relatively slow. Yet, the incidence of the HIV infection has exceeded an average rate of the European Union.

The Georgian Government is strongly committed to further accelerate the progress made in the national HIV/AIDS response. We are closely cooperating with UN Theme Group, the Global Fund and USAID and are grateful for their tremendous input in creation of an effective National AIDS control Service.

Mr. President,

Since 2004, Georgia has become and remains the only country in the region that ensures universal access to antiretroviral therapy (ART). We are pleased to acknowledge that through expanding free ART program to the region of Abkhazia, we were able to provide the lifesaving treatment throughout the whole territory of the country within its internationally recognized borders.

We welcome recent UN Security Council resolution on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in conflict zones. We hope, the international community will act more decisively to ensure the provision of corresponding mechanisms in two occupied regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia;

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Since 2005, Georgia has also ensured universal access to PMTCT services, including HIV testing and counselling, and prophylactic ARV therapy. As a result, there have been no cases of mother to child transmission of HIV among persons enrolled in the PMTCT program.

Building up a productive partnership with civil society, youth organizations, especially with people living with HIV were critical for gaining these achievements.

The Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) chaired by the First Lady of Georgia represents the single national AIDS coordinating authority with a broad representation that ensures multisectoral coordination of the National response. It is noteworthy that Mrs. Roelofs recently has been appointed as WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Health-related MDGs.

The National Strategic Plan of Action has been in place since 2003. In 2009, the Georgian Parliament adopted the new law on HIV/AIDS, which endorses rights-based approach to fighting the epidemic.

However, along with successes, national AIDS response is challenged by financial constraints to sustain the progress, especially after the current Global Fund assistance is withdrawn. Despite the heavy human, social and economic impact following the Russian invasion of 2008, the Georgian Government put all possible efforts to sustain the leadership and increase domestic funding allocations in subsequent years. However, within the limited fiscal capacity of the country, support from international community remains critical.

Distinguished Delegates,

My country has made substantial progress in responding to the HIV epidemic. Nevertheless, increased efforts are needed to meet the MDG goal 6 to halt and reverse the spread of the epidemic by 2015. Guided by the WHO Global Health Sector Strategy on HIV/AIDS, Georgia has defined early identification and treatment of HIV cases as future priority, which represents the most promising approach to eliminate the epidemic.

30 years of AIDS burden have shown that without solid political will and effective guidance we can't achieve our goal. During this battle, we emerged stronger and more committed to end the epidemic, secure future generations and save millions of lives.

*Thank you.*

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