

Statement

by

Statement by Ambassador Miguel Berger

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**on the occasion of the
High Level Meeting of the United Nations on HIV/AIDS
from 8th – 10th June in New York**

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(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman/President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The political declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the United Nations in 2001, was a milestone in global health policy. It was a ground-breaking act which set the course for the future and placed worldwide partnership on a new, shared, foundation.

For the first time we set common targets for the HIV response and we recognized the vital importance of people living with HIV and civil society in planning and implementing the HIV response.

HIV/AIDS is a challenge for every society not only from a health perspective. It calls for every government to take responsibility and show political leadership.

Germany has, in the past thirty years, been very successful with its national prevention programmes. We promote and engage civil society and people living with HIV and AIDS in the development and implementation of our HIV/AIDS strategy. We adapt these strategies regularly to new challenges.

Social exclusion and stigmatisation of individual groups – based on their sexual orientation, ethnic origin or behaviour – promotes the spread of new HIV infections.

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon highlighted this in his report on the implementation of the 2001 Declaration.

Let me be clear: We will not be able to achieve our goals in the future if we do not remove laws which punish homosexuality or fail to recognise drug addiction as an illness.

Gender inequality contributes globally to the spread of HIV. Women and girls are more vulnerable to infections and to social and economic consequences of the epidemic. Promoting gender equality and combating sexual violence are thus important measures against HIV.

In the past years Germany has increased its financial contributions to the fight against AIDS to 500 million Euro annually, . We support bilateral programmes on HIV in more than forty countries as well as the Global Fund and multilateral organisations such as UNAIDS. Reacting to the dramatic increase of new infections in some countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, we decided to significantly expand our bilateral cooperation in line with other international donors in several of these countries.

Further commitment is necessary if we are to successfully reduce the number of new infections. We are willing to do our part. At the same time our partners must increase their national prevention activities and remove persisting obstacles to prevention.

Every investment in health is an investment in the future and we need strong health systems in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Forty-one percent of all new HIV infections occur in the age-group of under twenty-five – sixty-three percent of these young infected are girls

and young women. Our most urgent goal must be to reduce this rate of infection. It is possible to do so only if a strong and informed youth takes the lead on health issues.

The current movements towards democracy in a number of countries is a demonstration of how young people can achieve change. They are globally connected and want to participate and be heard. **Their dedication raises hopes, also in terms of finding an answer to HIV and AIDS.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are here today to recommit to the obligations we committed ourselves in 2001. We had taken on very ambitious goals, not all of which were achievable. However, I am convinced that without these goals we would not be where we are today. This is why we must be perseverant in our efforts to achieve the vision of Michel Sidibé, the Executive director of UNAIDS,: “zero new infections, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths”.

This will only be possible if all political leaders take their responsibility seriously, engage with young people and work together with civil society and people living with HIV and AIDS.

In this spirit, I wish to re-affirm Germany's commitment as part of the responsibility which we all share as an international community of states.

Thank you very much for your attention.