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**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Sixty-fifth session

**High Level Meeting**  
**on the comprehensive review of the progress achieved**  
**in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS**  
**and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS**

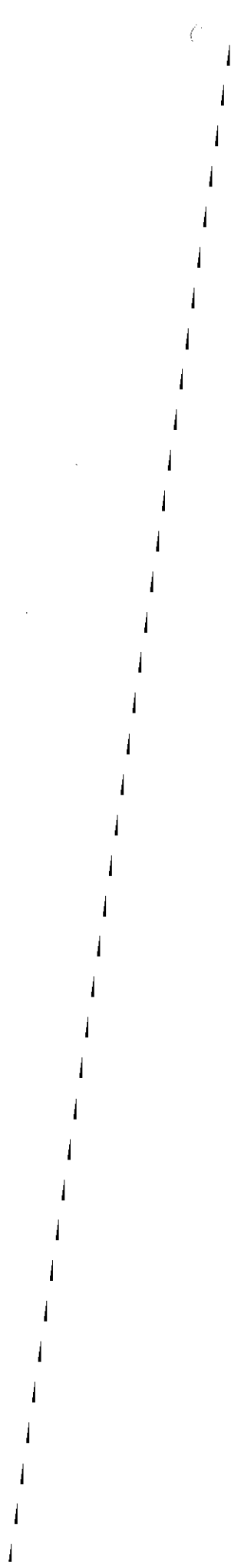
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Statement by  
**H.E. Mr. Andreas Loverdos**  
**Minister of Health & Social Solidarity**  
**of the Hellenic Republic**

**NEW YORK**  
**Thursday, June 9, 2011**

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Mr President  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

- This year sees three decades of fighting AIDS. The emergence and the rapid spread of the HIV-disease in the early 1980's came as a real shock. There is no excess in saying that the new virus raised an alarm for our countries, the WHO and the United Nations.
- The epidemic has deepened the gap between the North and the South, the developed and the developing countries. And even more, in the inner of wealthy states, the distance separating the rich from the poor became larger. The cost of prevention and medical treatment, particularly for the countries most affected, was and continues to be excessive.
- The epidemic has increased the risk of social stigma for entire groups of the population such as men having sex with men, drug addicts and people in need of transfusion. Basic human rights were being challenged and some offensive prejudices were reviving.
- For the international community, this year's UN High Level Meeting on AIDS implies an excellent opportunity: not only to recall the great achievements of our common fight against the disease during these last decades, but also to remind that the danger is not over. We have managed to get it under control thanks to our common efforts and the progress of science. However, we have not yet eliminated it. There is no room for complacency.
- Greece welcomes the ideas of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The goals he proposes are clear and ambitious. We do need such goals if we want to succeed. In cooperation with our EU partners, we are willing to work hard in order to achieve these goals.
- Efforts in Greece against AIDS have led us to some remarkable results over the past thirty years. Our basic objective was to ensure access to public health services. Currently, all people in need can receive medical and hospital treatment, even if they lack the means for it, even if they are poor, uninsured, financial or illegal immigrants. Another priority of ours was to protect human rights and promote actions against discrimination. Through campaigns in schools, the army, prisons and elsewhere, through blood safety controls we seek to strengthen prevention.

- In line with the recommendations of the Secretary General, we intent to reinforce these initiatives. Programmes for the free distribution of condoms and needle exchange should be expanded. To this end, we work closely with vulnerable groups of the population, with the civil society and the NGOs. Greece has contributed as a donor country to the Global Fund and UNAIDS and we steadily support the initiatives of the EU.
- As we speak, our main concern is the scourge of human trafficking. We had a significant increase of recorded AIDS infections last year. Many of these infections concern women from the sub-Saharan Africa, who have been brought to the country illegally and they were forced to work as prostitutes. It is obvious that problems of this kind can be addressed only through a closer international cooperation.
- Currently, about 6,000 patients are in treatment. The financial crisis affecting the country requires from us to invest our money in a more rational and efficient way. However, we are confident that we will succeed in this effort without lowering the level of protection and without losing people's confidence that they can rely on our public health system for their safety.

Mr President  
Ladies and Gentlemen

- I am here to declare the commitment of my country to remain in the vanguard of the fight against HIV-AIDS.