



INDIA
भारत

STATEMENT

BY

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**PLENARY OF THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING [HLM]
ON HIV/AIDS
AT THE 65TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York

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**Mr President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen!**

At the outset, I would like to compliment the President of the General Assembly for organizing this High Level Event on HIV/AIDS.

The UN Secretary General's report has shown that the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to outpace the response to contain and prevent its spread.

This situation persists despite three decades of concerted efforts to combat this epidemic.

Therefore, this High Level Meeting for comprehensively reviewing the progress in realizing the "Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" and "Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS" adopted in 2001 & 2006, respectively comes at a very opportune time.

The presence of a large number of Heads of States and Governments, Health Ministers, other eminent leaders, representatives Civil Society, NGOs and professionals from around the globe is a clear endorsement of the need for this event.

I also commend the efforts of the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Botswana for steering the difficult negotiations of the draft Declaration to a successful conclusion.

Mr President, permit me, with all humility to suggest, that along with declarations we need effective up scaling of our actions and resources if we wish to steal a march over this global epidemic. Our actions must match our words.

India has a strong prevention programme which goes hand in hand with care, support and treatment. We have been able to contain the epidemic with a prevalence of just 0.31 %. We have also brought about a decline of 50% in new infections annually. Over the last decade, there is evidence of stabilization of the epidemic with definite success in reversal in some parts of the country.

Our focus has been on high risk groups, expanding services and improving access to Anti Retro Viral Therapy.

Universal access to second line ART and early infant diagnosis are in an advanced stage of being rolled out.

Strategies for behaviour change communication include “The Red Ribbon Express”, which is a unique train that covers the length and breadth of the country disseminating awareness about HIV/AIDs and providing services to about 8 million people annually.

We are now at the threshold of commencing the next phase of the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP - IV).

Mother to child transmission of the infection continues to be a challenge. We aspire to achieve zero transmission in the new born.

Our strategy in India is to convert the 27 million annual pregnancies into institutional deliveries for efficacious preventive interventions through better detection of HIV positivity amongst pregnant women.

From a paltry Seven hundred thousand institutional deliveries in 2006, the number of institutional deliveries has increased to over 10 million in 2010.

This year onwards institutional deliveries at government health institutions are being made cashless.

Diagnostic tests, drugs, diet, transport would be provided free of cost to all pregnant women and sick newborn.

I am confident, that this significant step will help in the elimination of transmission of HIV from the mother to her new born, apart from further reducing IMR, MMR and improving immunization levels.

We are also launching a new initiative to deliver male and female contraceptives at the household level.

This scheme of door to door distribution, through Eight hundred thousand Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), will initially be implemented in 233 districts of 17 provinces, covering an approximate population of 200 million and will be scaled-up to cover the entire country soon.

This will help us in prevention of spread of HIV infection and in our population stabilization efforts.

We are conscious that persons infected and affected with HIV still face stigma, which is not only a barrier for accessing services, but also a violation of their rights. India is committed to fight this stigma so that people living with HIV can live lives of dignity.

Investments in public health continue to be an overriding priority of the Government of India.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

At today's critical time in our efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, it is imperative that the international community remain highly engaged

A foremost requirement is to bridge the resource gap. It is essential that the international community continues to commit funds commensurate with the requirement for containing HIV/AIDS.

Besides, the international community has to dismantle barriers that obstruct universal access to treatment.

A key barrier in universal access to treatment is the high cost of Anti Retro Viral medicines.

Pharmaceutical companies in my country have been providing high quality and affordable drugs for use not only in India but also supplying to around 200 countries.

I would also like to take this opportunity to make it abundantly clear that these generic drugs are not cheap in terms of quality.

It is important that considerations of commerce and profitability are not used to erect artificial barriers between life and death.

I would also like to urge the international community to work together for removing barriers in the form of Intellectual Property Rights or other means.

We must ensure, that all flexibilities in TRIPS must be used for better availability of affordable medicines.

Therefore, we need proactive and collective action from the international community to dismantle these barriers and improve the availability of accessible, affordable and quality drugs for the needy and impoverished.

Mr. President,

With these words, let me join others in reaffirming India's strong commitment and firm resolve to fight this epidemic in a concerted and collaborative manner.

Thank you for attention.