



**STALNA MISIJA CRNE GORE PRI UJEDINJENIM NACIJAMA  
PERMANENT MISSION OF MONTENEGRO TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT**

**by H.E. Mr. Milorad Šćepanović,  
Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations  
at the 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  
10 June 2011**

*Please check against delivery*

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for convening this important meeting. It is a great honour to address this extraordinary gathering on a matter that so deeply affects the whole world, especially marginalised and vulnerable sectors of the society.

Montenegro align itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of the European Union.

We welcome the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS that we are adopting here. We would like to stress the importance of achieving commitments contained in it.

Mr. President,

With extremely high infection rates in some parts of the world and high death rates once AIDS is developed, the pandemic is truly a global threat to health, development, quality of life, security and stability. Clearly, the progress in combating HIV/AIDS is directly linked with a broader international development agenda and represents a prerequisite for reaching universal development targets. Unfortunately, the expansion rate of the epidemic is outstripping our abilities to follow with necessary access to essential services. HIV/AIDS is undermining the important achievements made so far in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, reducing child mortality etc. We have a moral responsibility, therefore, to reaffirm the commitments made in the past and work to further scale up efforts to reverse the HIV epidemic.

Mr. President,

Even though HIV/AIDS epidemic is worst in sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern European countries are witnessing alarming yearly increases in infection rates. It might not affect every country equally, but it affects the whole region and therefore it is the issue that the whole region must address together.

The current HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Montenegro is 0.013%, but regional trends indicate a real potential for rapid spread of HIV, if prevention among key target groups is not improved. The cumulative number of people registered with HIV since 1989 was 119, out of whom 65 had developed AIDS and 33 died.

Government of Montenegro is strongly committed to combating HIV/AIDS on a country level. The First National HIV/AIDS Strategy for Montenegro, partially financed by the Global Fund, was a good basis for prevention HIV/AIDS and had a special focus on safe blood and populations most at risk, improvement of diagnosis, treatment and care of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Through the implementation of this Strategy, Montenegro has made significant progress in the following areas: national guidelines and protocols for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS have been published; existing laws and policies have been revised or new ones have been adopted; key target group has received necessary materials and information about HIV prevention as well as medical services; health workers capacities have been built, as well as capacities of prison staff, peer educators, youth and NGOs, Government's institutions in monitoring and evaluation, including biological behavioral surveillance. National Coordination Body, established to ensure the common direction in partnership and appropriate response in tackling complex medical, social, legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS, has developed the project "Support to the implementation of national strategy to combat HIV / AIDS in Montenegro". This project was singled out at some regional conferences as one of the most successful in the Eastern European region.

The achieved success has to be maintained and the national response has to be intensified in order to provide universal access to key interventions in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Thus, Montenegro is looking into ways to increase its efforts to respond to remaining major challenges such as stigmatization and discrimination, as well as lack of necessary research, data, technical expertise, human resources within the Government, sustainable and long-term financing and more active involvement of the private sector. Towards this end new National Strategy to Combat HIV/AIDS for the period 2010-2014 was adopted. The aim of this Strategy for Montenegro is to maintain the status of a country with low growth rate of HIV infection, to ensure universal access to HIV prevention and treatment and to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV through a coordinated multisectoral response. Strategy has eight strategic program areas that focus on creating a safe and supportive environment, HIV prevention among clearly defined target groups, treatment, care and support people living with HIV, and coordinated response on the basis of existing evidence.

Mr. President,

HIV/AIDS clearly represents both an immediate and long-term crisis for the international community, the one that simply cannot be addressed by a traditional state-centric approach. Success is only possible if there is a global solidarity to create strong leadership and commitment, increased international coordination and cooperation to build on existing efforts and avoid overlapping, along with sustainable long-term strategies and funding and participation of all relevant stakeholders. It is imperative to note that this cannot be done without the crucial involvement of the UN agencies and programmes, which already had a significant role in leading the international response.

Thank you!