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**Address by H.E. Mrs. Simona Miculescu,
Permanent Representative of Romania 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**

9 June 2011, New York

Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

This High-level meeting on HIV/AIDS represents for Romania the opportunity to discuss and structure new and creative ways of solving major public health issues, by replacing the classical epidemiological dogmas with an avant-garde approach, based on therapy, not on rhetoric.

Facing a true HIV/AIDS epidemic among small children at the beginning at the 90's, Romania had to take – in due time – measures that, at that moment, seemed unimaginable. So what has our country done to resolve and control this scourge? I am happy to share with you, in a nutshell, the answer, that can be considered a success story, having in mind where we started from and where we are now:

- In 1985 and 1986, Romania identified a series of HIV infection cases in adults, moment when it decided to exercise a strict control over these cases, through the establishment of a special center for these patients. At that time, terminal cases were being considered, as was the practice around the world. Moreover, Romania reported those cases to the World Health Organization, an unusual action for a former socialist country.
- Immediately after 1990, Romania was confronted with an epidemic among homeless children, being taken care of in orphanages. This marked a historic moment in which Romania was recognized, at the world level, as a country with a significant public health problem.
- At that time, Romania quickly realized that a series of new measures were needed, and that the strict isolation method was not longer relevant. That measure was the one we today call “anti-retroviral therapy”.
- 1995 would bring this therapy into discussion, and, after signing the Paris Declaration the same year, Romania was trying to keep up with the most recent discoveries in the medication field – at enormous costs at the time.
- 1997 imposed a new sanitary policy in the field – this moment marked Romania's decision to take a new approach. This new approach consisted in a public-private partnership, that resulted in the establishment of 9 regional centers dealing with HIV/AIDS issues in Romania, as well as in the reestablishment of the National Anti-AIDS Fight Program, with the following essential components:
 - The creation of a national database
 - The introduction of the anti-retroviral therapy
 - The introduction of HIV testing for more vulnerable categories, as well as the testing of couples before marriage.

2001 was the year of Romania's negotiations, in New York, with UNAIDS assistance, of its ARV medication. As such, in 2002, Romania benefited from reduced costs to medication, which allowed it to quickly reach its target of universal access to anti-retroviral therapy.

This result, mirroring also a political decision, contributed to the sustainability of its national program, that resulted in granting a second chance to life to the HIV infected children and in creating an epidemiological profile.

After 26 years of evolution of the HIV epidemic, the results prove, without any doubt, that, when there is the political will – beyond the routine political thickets – we can find a solution for any problem, even one of public health. Let me also mention in this context that, having so much to do and research in this area, Romania has established the European Academy on HIV/AIDS and Infectious Diseases, that is available for professional training, establishment of standards of care and, not lastly, research in this field. It is another efficient platform of cooperation that we should use to mark ever more progress in this sensitive area.

2011 represents for Romania, as well as for other countries, a crossroad in the approach to HIV/AIDS. It is for the first time, since the pandemic has spread, that we can talk about cure in very clear terms. For the “cure of HIV/AIDS” not to remain just mere words, we should all do at least three things, namely:

1. To ensure free access to therapy for all those infected with HIV or that already have AIDS,
2. To ensure sustainable prevention of vertical transmission from mother to child, through already proven therapeutic means,
3. To sustainably address vulnerable groups: men that have sex with men, intravenous drug users and sex workers.

Mr. President,

From this moment on, our options are very clearly known. If we apply them in a constant and sustainable manner, then future generations will be grateful. If we do not apply them and they remain just rhetoric, then... “God forgive us”.

And because we believe very much not only in words, but also in concrete actions and long-term visions, I would like to express Romania’s strong political commitment towards the universal access targets in line with the MDGs, as well as our total support for the UNAIDS Global Strategy for 2011-2015.

A world with zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related death is the world that we should not only imagine, but build through our endeavours and dedication. Romania is optimistic in this respect, and ready for this challenge.