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STATEMENT

by Professor VERONIKA SKVORTSOVA,
Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development
of the Russian Federation
at the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS

New York, 9 June 2011

Mr. President,

The Russian Federation is among those countries that have been, over the last ten years, undertaking considerable efforts to combat the HIV infection. Therefore, we welcome the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on such an important issue.

In accordance with the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS of 2001 and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS of 2006, the Russian Federation has been actively and consistently fulfilling its commitments aimed at the prevention and early detection of HIV infection, provision of universal access to treatment and social care to HIV-infected people.

The national legislation of the Russian Federation guarantees access for all the citizens to free large-scale prevention programs and HIV-testing, and for HIV-infected people – access to free high-quality medical care and protection of their rights.

Within the framework of the National Priority Project “Health”, a comprehensive system of measures to combat HIV infection has been created and is being carried out under the leadership of the Governmental commission that coordinates concerted action of the federal executive bodies, the executive bodies of the 83 regions of the Russian Federation, and NGOs.

These measures made it possible to contain the HIV epidemic in the concentrated phase (the share of HIV-infected people at present is 0.36%).

After several years of the spread of the epidemic, in 2008 for the first time, a reduction in the rate of incidence of new HIV infections was observed; in 2009 and 2010 a turning point was registered - the number of new HIV infections stabilized at 62.5 thousand per year.

The main priority in combating HIV infection in the Russian Federation is the enhancement of the multisectoral program for primary prevention and promotion of healthy lifestyles aimed at

motivating people to consciously give up risky behaviour patterns. The implementation of innovative prevention technologies which take into account the cognitive and psychological specificities of different age and social groups, especially children and youth, allowed to reduce, during the last ten years, the share of HIV-infected youth among the total number of HIV-infected people by 11.2 times - down to 2.2%, and the share of HIV-infected children by 48 times - down to 0.1%.

Of particular importance are measures to prevent HIV-infection among groups at high risk, including those engaging in risky behaviours. To motivate these social groups to accept voluntary HIV-testing, systematic treatment, and counseling and social support, we actively cooperate with civil-society, non-governmental and religious organizations.

The annual coverage of the population, in particular risk groups, by voluntary HIV testing is 22 to 25 million people i.e. 15 to 17% of the total population of Russia. It makes it possible to ensure not only the credibility of data on HIV prevalence but also the early detection of HIV infection. In 2010, for instance, 70% of those detected for the first time as HIV-positive were diagnosed at the very early stages of the disease - 6-7 years before they would require medication.

National data accounting system for HIV-infected people covers each of the 83 regions of Russia and provides the basis for planning the amounts and types of diagnostic, preventive and treatment services.

Among followed-up HIV-infected people, the number of people who annually undergo laboratory tests increased by one third and reached 91%.

The Russian Federation places special emphasis on measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In 2010 more than 93% of pregnant HIV-positive women were covered by these measures, which represents a 35% increase in 5 years. As a result, the number of infected newborns decreased more than 2 times, and more than 50 thousand healthy children were born to HIV-positive mothers.

In order to provide medical assistance to HIV-infected people a specialized service has been created consisting of about 100 prevention and treatment centers and close to 2 thousand diagnostic laboratories.

Along with prevention services, the Russian government provides free antiretroviral drugs to all who need it.

Over the last five years, Federal Budget allocations for universal access of HIV-positive people to dispensary observation and treatment has increased manifold (6 times) and amounted for more than 40 billion rubles or more than 1,3 billion USD.

It has to be emphasized that effectiveness of medical and social assistance made it possible for 73% of children that were infected with HIV in 1990s to lead a normal life, to enter universities and colleges, to create families and have healthy children.

It is true that the solution of the problem of HIV infection will depend, to a great extent, on the level of scientific research and the prospects of the emergence of new effective methods of specific vaccine-based prevention. The Russian Federation attaches particular importance to the stimulation of innovative research in this area. A promising vaccine is being developed under state supervision, which is currently undergoing the second phase of clinical tests. We hope it will contribute to the prevention of HIV infection.

In line with the international commitments adopted by the G8, Russia has been actively contributing to the strengthening of international efforts to combat HIV infection and improve access of HIV-infected people to treatment.

Since 2006, our country has been a donor of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria and is now increasing its support to it. During that period, the Russian contribution to the Global Fund totaled 317 million US dollars.

In conclusion, I would like to express satisfaction with the collective work on the draft Declaration, and generally support it.

The use of the experience accumulated at the national level can improve the effectiveness of the integrated international measures for eliminating the humankind from HIV infection.

We are ready to share our positive results and developments.

Thank you for your attention.