

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON HIV-  
AIDS

STATEMENT BY SPAIN

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*Non-Official Translation*

Thank you, Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor for me to participate for the first time at this High Level Meeting of the General Assembly.

I would like to begin by stressing the central role that the UN develops in the response to the HIV pandemic, its key contribution to the achievements so far and the important leadership that the Organization plays to improve the response in the future.

My Delegation would like to endorse the intervention made by the European Union.

As you know, Spain was among the most affected European countries by the HIV epidemic in the early 1990's. The epidemic at the time was mainly concentrated among drug users. The active participation of all stakeholders, the use of the available scientific evidence and the commitment of policy makers contributed to the adoption of rigorous and courageous measures that have contributed to the significant change experienced by the epidemic in my country. Our current epidemiological situation is very similar to that of neighboring countries. Let me highlight some of the measures which I think are more significant and have contributed to this change: the universal coverage of free antiretroviral therapy, the promotion of effective preventive measures such as condom use and harm reduction strategies for the entire population, including in prisons, and a very active participation of civil society in the response to the epidemic. The adoption of these early measures was not easy, but looking back now we are able to say they were right. I would also like to mention the success of needle exchange programs and opiate substitution treatments in Spanish prisons, without having experienced significant security problems.

The achievement of equal rights for women and men, regardless of their identity or sexual orientation is another important achievement of the last decade. An ethical and effective response to the HIV epidemic necessarily involves the full integration on equal terms of homosexual and transgender people in our societies. A quality affective-sexual education in schools and its adaptation to student diversity is essential to this integration process and to decrease the vulnerability of some population groups most affected by HIV.

However, significant challenges remain, and one of them is especially important: people with HIV continue to be stigmatized and discriminated against in my country, as in all countries. I would like to stress the importance that Spain attaches to this issue and the efforts we are making to contribute to the disappearance of such unfair situation.

Mr. President,

My government shares and will contribute to the achievement of targets set in the new strategies of UNAIDS and WHO for the period 2011-2015.

To achieve this, we consider it essential to understand that the HIV pandemic is determined not only by biological and behavioral factors, but also cultural, social and economic ones. Economic and social inequalities are fractures of the social fabric that enable pandemics to spread in our communities. Effective interventions should therefore address all these aspects and pursue the removal of inequality at all levels.

The response to the HIV epidemic should be comprehensive, hence the need to strengthen synergies between the response to the HIV epidemic and the response to other health problems. It is therefore of great importance to integrate this response into the health systems and to contribute to its strengthening, as well as to support actions in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of the disease. Strengthening health systems contributes to combating the HIV pandemic, while HIV comprehensive investment contributes to strengthening public health systems.

Spain has also been committed from the outset with the global response to AIDS that we believe must be addressed from a global health perspective, starting from the defence of human rights and sexual health and reproductive rights, and always with a gender-based perspective.

The volume of official development aid that my country has committed to this response has been significant and consistent with the vision we stand for and be put into practice especially in financing the Global Fund. My Government reiterates its commitment to universal access and we will find ways to remain responsive to the needs in order to help achieve this goal.

Furthermore, Spain is actively involved in policy dialogues to share our experiences and lessons learned with the rest of the international community. We have actively participated in the network of knowledge exchange and contributed to the training of HIV experts.

In the current circumstances, the international community must be aware of the need to update our policies to bring them to the most in need and the most vulnerable groups, as is their right. We must face the disease with realism and hope, enhancing our commitment and selecting the most effective policies to achieve universal access, both to prevention tools and existing treatment, and research for new tools such as pre-exposure prophylaxis, AIDS vaccines and

microbicides. This should enable us to achieve the objectives of the new strategy of UNAIDS, expanding the concept of right to health and the vision of a global health goal.

Mr. President

I wish to conclude by recalling that Spain is committed to allocating 0.7% of our GDP to Official Development Aid in 2015 and, in the same period, devoting 0.1% to health, prioritizing the strengthening of equitable health systems and the effective integration of programs addressed to the most prevalent diseases, such as HIV, and the most vulnerable groups, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

I conclude by reiterating the commitment of the Government of Spain with this epidemic and those affected by it.

Thank you.