

Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a General Assembly High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS

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Good Afternoon. Mr. President, I am honored to represent the United States at the General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS.

Today, thirty years after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention first reported on the condition that would eventually become known as HIV, the world has proven that we can tackle this pandemic. But going forward, all of us must do more.

We call today on our fellow donors and partners—great and small—to increase their investments and redouble their commitment.

We do so because the history of the pandemic shows how much we can accomplish when we stand together. In 2001, when the General Assembly held its special session, the global HIV/AIDS situation was grave. From 1981 to 2001, nearly 58 million people worldwide were infected. More than 25 million people died. Health systems buckled under the weight of the pandemic.

The American people were moved by this sweeping tragedy, and we urged the international community to come together in a spirit of compassion and concern. The General Assembly's 2001 Special Session on HIV/AIDS underscored our shared responsibility to respond.

My government has long been a long leader in this global fight. The United States played a central role in establishing the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. In 2002, the United States made the founding pledge to the Global Fund, and today, we are proud to remain by far its largest single donor.

We made our first-ever multi-year pledge to the Global Fund this year and are working closely with the Fund on a robust reform agenda that will let it save even more lives.

In 2003, the United States created the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, known as PEPFAR—the largest international response to a single disease that any country has ever mounted. When PEPFAR was launched, fewer than 50,000 people in all of sub-Saharan Africa had access to treatment. By September 2010, PEPFAR had supported treatment for more than 3.2 million people, the vast majority of them in Africa.

Today, more than 3.8 million orphans and vulnerable children also receive PEPFAR support that gives them education, nutrition, and a chance for a better life.

One particular focus of U.S. efforts has been the reduction in mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In 2010, programs supported by PEPFAR provided HIV counseling and testing to more than 8.6 million pregnant women. More than 600,000 of them tested positive for HIV and received anti-retroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission— and thereby saving the lives of about 114,000 babies from HIV infection.

So today, let us renew our common commitment to achieve a generation free of HIV.

The United States also remains committed to responding to the serious HIV epidemic we face here at home. In all, more than 1.7 million Americans have become infected with HIV; more than 600,000 have died of AIDS; and more than 50,000 people become infected with HIV each year.

In July 2010, the United States released the first comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States to provide a road map for reducing the number of new HIV infections, increasing access to care for people living with HIV, and reducing HIV-related health disparities.

Mr. President, we remain proud that the United States currently provides about 58 percent of all donor government resources to respond to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

This stems from an abiding commitment. President Bush launched PEPFAR, and President Obama has ramped it up and combined it with other programs under the U.S. Global Health Initiative. That means that we get better overall health outcomes as we tackle HIV, and that we get better AIDS outcomes as we tackle maternal and child health, neglected tropical diseases, and other crucial dimensions of global public health. The United States has long been a leader in saving lives and restoring hope—and we will not let up now.

But the global HIV/AIDS challenge cannot be met by any one country alone. AIDS is truly a global crisis, and it requires a truly global response. Today, we urge our fellow donors and the private sector to do more, to give more, and invest more.

To sustain the fight over the long term, affected countries themselves must provide resources—based on their economic capacities—to protect their citizens from HIV/AIDS. Other donor countries must also increase their commitment to the fight. And again, so must the private sector.

At the same time, we should take a moment today to salute the champions of the fight against HIV/AIDS in the worst-affected countries—governments that have risen to defend their citizens, communities that have rallied around those in need, and civil society groups and individuals whose activism and simple decency have offered hope and comfort in hours of grief and fear. You are the unsung heroes of this battle. And the best way we can honor you and your dedication is to join together in redoubling our fight.

Mr. President, we must do more than maintain the gains we have made. We must expand on them.

Too many people are counting on us. Too many lives can and must still be saved. The Declaration we will adopt at this meeting reflects a strong and shared commitment. We urge all of our fellow member states to join in giving that commitment greater meaning and power—to come together, to lead, and to rise to this grave and urgent challenge.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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