

30 November 2007

**Message of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on World AIDS Day**

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has a direct impact on achieving the United Nations development goals. It is a major cause of death globally. Two and a half million people will be infected, and over two million people will die of the disease in 2007, devastating families and entire communities. The international response, in particular our preventative measures, are clearly failing to keep pace with the rate of infection. Many regions of the world are off-track to meet the Millennium Development Goal agreed by world leader in 2000 to halt or reverse its spread by 2015.

As we mark the 20th World AIDS day, we should recognise that while there has been some success in reducing infection rates in some countries, the disease remains a major challenge for many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Eight countries in Africa now account for almost one-third of all new HIV infections and AIDS deaths globally. Every human life lost to AIDS is a tragedy when knowledge and resources have made it possible to prevent these deaths.

The General Assembly plays a leadership role by raising awareness of these issues. The General Assembly will hold a Comprehensive Review in 2008 to assess the progress made to realise the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. This meeting will provide leaders with an opportunity to take stock and accelerate the implementation of their international commitments to combat HIV/AIDS. In particular, our efforts must focus on providing better access to treatment and cheaper drugs as well as the continued focus on education and prevention measures.