

1 December 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
on World Aids Day**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Madame Director-General,
Excellencies,
Dear Friends,

Today we put aside our personal cares for a moment to join together in an international demonstration of solidarity with the millions of people around the world who are suffering from HIV/AIDS. I am very glad to join you and Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, and Secretary-General Ban to reaffirm our collective determination bring an end to this scourge.

All of us know communities that are being ravaged by this devastating epidemic. It took a long time for us to recognize how vulnerable we all are, and to assume our share of the responsibility to combat HIV/AIDS by helping our brothers and sisters and children who are directly affected.

We must be grateful for the determination of individuals and non-governmental organizations and eventually governments and the United Nations who have made us very aware of this pandemic and know that it is a threat to all of us – men and women, gay and straight, children and even babies.

Our growing awareness and acts of solidarity give life to the local and global networks that raise the resources required for their treatment. It is our concern that correlates directly to the effectiveness of the ever-evolving educational campaigns aimed at prevention of HIV/AIDS. It is our awareness that is reducing the stigma long associated with HIV/AIDS, and providing the compassionate care that mitigates the suffering of its victims and their families.

But the simple facts that two and a half million people were infected with HIV last year, and another 2.1 million died of AIDs around the world underscore the huge amount of work that remains to be done. Let us draw on the deep reservoirs of compassion that are within each of us to sustain our determination to conquer this disease and to care for its many victims. Let us stand together in this determination and in solidarity.

Thank you.