

1 December 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
on World AIDS Day**

In June 2011, the High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS that set ambitious goals to be met by 2015. Achieving these goals will help us fight the epidemic and move towards a world where there will be Zero new HIV infections, Zero AIDS-related deaths and Zero stigma and discrimination.

I am greatly encouraged by the impressive results demonstrated by AIDS response. According to the most recent report by UNAIDS, the pace of progress accelerated significantly, with more people than ever accessing life-saving antiretroviral treatment, fewer new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, and narrowing AIDS funding gap.

These results are the best testament to the unprecedented global solidarity that has mobilized governments, affected communities, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector around a common objective. Most importantly, these results give us a hope that with continued commitment and hard work, we can turn the tide to achieve an AIDS-free generation and ultimately end the AIDS epidemic. They also provide an excellent example and inspiration that can help inform our discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

However, the fight against AIDS is not over yet. We are still 2.5 million infections away from achieving the goal of Zero new HIV infections. The goal of Zero AIDS-related deaths remains distant as about half of people living with HIV eligible for treatment still have no access to it, with 1.7 million deaths due to AIDS-related complications in 2011. Stigma and discrimination continue to plague all corners of the world, with 45 countries and territories imposing restrictions on entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV, and 60 countries having laws that specifically criminalize HIV transmission.

We need to re-double our efforts to address the scourge of HIV and AIDS. In this respect, getting to Zero requires a renewed commitment to a response that is based on respect for human rights and is guided by evidence. Simply put, it means that every person shall have access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support – with no distinction or discrimination of any kind. We cannot achieve Zero new HIV infections and Zero AIDS-related deaths if fear of stigma, discrimination and violence are driving people away from testing and accessing treatment.

The deadline for achieving the 2015 goals is fast approaching. I call on all governments and partners to work together to overcome the remaining challenges and to deliver on the commitment to stop the AIDS epidemic. Together, we can get to Zero!

Thanks.