

1 December 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
to mark World AIDS Day**

This year we commemorate World AIDS Day with more optimism than ever before.

The commitment, solidarity and persistent efforts of the international community in response to the AIDS epidemic have yielded remarkable results.

The number of people newly infected with the disease has declined 38% since 2001, while the number of people receiving anti-retroviral treatment (ARV) is at an all-time high. Nearly 12.9 million people received ARV treatment globally by the end of 2013.

Although these results are both notable and encouraging, there are a number of challenges that remain. The international community must not become complacent or let its guard down, as AIDS remains a serious threat to the well-being of millions of people. Together, we must pledge our steadfast commitment to ending the AIDS epidemic.

Despite significant increases in the number of adults receiving anti-retroviral treatment, children's accessibility to similar treatment remains unacceptably low.

Furthermore, although the number of AIDS-related deaths for most age groups has declined, the same cannot be said of adolescents. Young women and girls are particularly at risk due to gender-based violence and inequality.

In our collective efforts to stop this scourge, these gaps must be closed. No one can be left behind, especially those most vulnerable to infection.

We must be guided by scientific evidence and respect for human rights. Community engagement is also essential for success.

Research initiatives for new medicines must be supported and attention must be paid to local capacity-building in developing countries. Efforts must be made to continue bringing down the cost of medicines and ensure that treatment, care and support are available and affordable for all those who need it.

While prejudice and stigma directed toward those most affected by the AIDS epidemic has decreased, much more remains to be done. Such behaviours not only impact affected individuals, but also undermine the ability to effectively respond to the crisis.

As we come together to mark this important day, I commend UNAIDS for its vision and leadership of global efforts on this issue. Together, let us strive to bring an end to this epidemic, for the betterment of people and communities worldwide.