

**The 2005-2010 World AIDS Campaign (WAC) –
At a Glance Fact Sheet on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS**

The AIDS epidemic began over 20 years ago and today, its pace of expansion still continues to outstrip all efforts to respond to it. However, experience in tackling AIDS has taught us that with sufficient will and resources we can reverse and halt the spread of HIV. One of the most powerful tools the world has at its disposal in responding to AIDS is the United Nations Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. It was unanimously agreed in June 2001 by 189 Heads of State and Representatives of Governments who gathered for the UN General Assembly's Special Session on HIV and AIDS. The event was a landmark meeting. For the first time, politicians, health-care officials, and patient advocates from around the world all agreed that HIV and AIDS can be halted, but only by pooling resources across national borders and by striving to effect major changes in attitude, lifestyle and communication in nearly all levels of society.

WHAT IS THE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS?

The Declaration is a powerful tool that can provide guidance and secure action, commitment, support and resources for all those responding to AIDS, both within and outside government. National leaders have promised that its 103 commitments on HIV and AIDS will be delivered at country level by the target date of 2010. In doing so, the Declaration emphasises the need for governments and civil society to work together in all aspects of the HIV and AIDS response as they seek to meet the Declaration's targets and commitments.

The Declaration of Commitment:

- notes that stigma, silence, discrimination and denial, as well as lack of confidentiality, undermine all prevention, care and treatment efforts;
- notes that economic, social, political, financial, legal and cultural factors are hampering awareness, education, prevention, care, treatment and support efforts;
- recognizes that access to medication is part of the right of everyone to achieve the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health;
- acknowledges that prevention of HIV infection must be the mainstay of national, regional and international responses to the epidemic;
- recognizes that to achieve its prevention goals, all countries must continue to emphasise widespread and effective prevention;
- recognizes that effective prevention, care and treatment strategies will require behavioural changes and more available and non-discriminatory access to vaccines, condoms, microbicides, lubricants and sterile injecting equipment;
- recognizes the fundamental importance of strengthening national, regional and subregional capacities to address and effectively respond to HIV and AIDS, and that this will require increased and sustained human, financial and technical resources through strengthened national action and cooperation and increased regional, subregional and international cooperation;
- affirms that beyond the key role played by communities, an important factor is strong partnerships among governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental agencies, people living with HIV and AIDS, vulnerable groups, medical, scientific and educational institutions, NGOs, foundations, community organizations and traditional leaders;
- recognizes that respect for the rights of people living with HIV or AIDS drives an effective response;

- acknowledges the particular role and significant contributions of people living with HIV and AIDS, young people and civil society participants in addressing the AIDS epidemic in all its aspects, and recognizes it is crucial that they participate in designing, planning, implementing and evaluating AIDS-related programmes in order to develop effective responses to the AIDS epidemic.

SUMMARY

The Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS first describes the extent of the epidemic, its effects and the ways to effectively respond to it. It is not a legally binding document. However, it is a clear statement by governments about what they have agreed should be done to respond to AIDS and then spells out what governments have pledged to do, often with specific deadlines, to reverse the epidemic, by themselves, with others in international and regional partnerships, and with the support of civil society. The Declaration helps to make up the 6th United Nations Millennium Development Goal, which aims to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV by 2015.