



PRESS RELEASE

AIDS EPIDEMIC STILL OUTPACING RESPONSE

Report by UN Secretary-General calls on governments to expand access to HIV prevention and treatment

United Nations, New York, 2 June 2005 – Despite encouraging signs that the AIDS epidemic is beginning to be contained in a small but growing number of countries, the epidemic continues to expand worldwide, according to a report released by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The report was prepared for a high-level UN ministerial gathering today that will assess progress towards meeting the targets set four years ago at a historic UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

"We are seeing real signs of progress in tackling AIDS at the community level, but it is still not enough," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "It is time for Governments to translate commitment into concrete action. In September, world leaders will meet at the United Nations to assess progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration, and to chart the road ahead. How we fare in the fight against AIDS is crucial. Halting the spread is not only a Millennium Development Goal in itself; it is a prerequisite for reaching most of the others."

While progress has been made, the report emphasizes the need for an increased global response in order to meet the 2005 goals agreed to by all UN Member States at the UN Special Session in 2001. These goals, contained in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, focus on the rapid expansion of HIV prevention, care, treatment and impact alleviation programmes. They are a vital foundation to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goal of halting and reversing the epidemic by 2015.

For example, one of the goals is that by the end of 2005, HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15 to 24 in the most affected countries should be at least 25% lower than in 2001. The reality is that young people continue to represent one half of all new HIV infections worldwide, and often do not have access to life-saving prevention services.

"The AIDS epidemic has entered a new and critical phase, and so must the response," said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. "The only way we will get ahead of the epidemic is if there is universal access to HIV prevention and treatment. This needs to be the world's immediate goal."

UN Member States participating in today's General Assembly High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS will review progress made towards achieving the UN goals, and will outline solutions and policies needed to meet the targets and roll back the epidemic.

According to the Secretary-General's report, progress has been made on several fronts since 2001. Worldwide, the number of people receiving counselling and testing services has doubled over the past four years. The number of women accessing services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission has increased by 70%, and the number of young people who have received AIDS education has doubled.

Funding for AIDS in developing countries has also increased dramatically – from US\$2 billion in 2001 to an estimated US\$8 billion in 2005. But resources still fall short of what is needed to effectively turn back the epidemic.

Despite encouraging signs, the report also outlines serious challenges that need urgent attention in order to achieve the intended goal of reversing the epidemic. Access to HIV treatment and prevention services remains low. As of end 2004, only 12% of the 6 million people who need HIV treatment worldwide had access to it. Globally, only one in five people has access to prevention services. And targeted prevention services in 2003 reached only 16% of sex workers, 11% of men who have sex with men, 20% of street children, and less than 5% of the world's 13 million injecting drug users.

The report makes specific recommendations for scaling up prevention and treatment efforts, expanding services to orphans and children made vulnerable by AIDS, ensuring gender equality, and mobilizing additional resources for fighting AIDS. These include making HIV testing services more widely available, integrating HIV prevention into treatment scale up efforts, promoting universal free education for boys and girls, and combating violence against women.

About the UN Secretary-General's Report

The report of the UN Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly today is based on country data from various sources, including national data on key AIDS indicators from 17 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, other national surveys, commissioned studies and evidence-based estimates of coverage for key AIDS interventions. In 2006, the UN Secretary-General will release a more comprehensive report on meeting the 2005 goals based on end 2005 data on all global and country indicators. The indicators measure the progress towards implementing the targets and goals of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The indicators are broken down as follows:

- **Global-level indicators** (e.g., international spending, policies and advocacy efforts)
- **National commitment and action indicators** (e.g., domestic government spending; country-level policy development and implementation)
- **National programme and behaviour indicators** (e.g., access of vulnerable groups to key services; risk behaviour changes)
- **National impact indicators** (e.g., rate of new infections among young people, high-risk groups and infants born to HIV-infected mothers)

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