



MAURITIUS

STATEMENT

By

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At The High-Level Meeting on a Comprehensive Review
of the Progress Achieved in Realizing the Declaration
of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political
Declaration on HIV/AIDS

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Mr. President,

I join previous speakers in thanking you for convening this High Level Meeting and also to commend the Secretary-General for his report on the Comprehensive Review of the Progress Achieved in Realizing the 2001 Declaration of Commitments on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS of 2006 contained in document A/62/780. Let me also add that my delegation subscribes to the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77 and China, Egypt on behalf of the African Group and Zambia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

Mr. President,

In the light of the Report of the Secretary-General and the various statements that we have heard over the last two days, it is more than evident that world leaders, governments, civil societies, non-governmental organisations amongst others are more than ever committed in their resolve to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is no doubt that progress has been made to curtail the increase of the epidemic. However, the question that we all ask is whether we have achieved enough since the 2006 High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, which had set ambitious national targets for scaling up universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. The answer unfortunately is not very encouraging as evidenced by the facts and figures in the Secretary-General's Report:

- Current trends suggest that the world will fall short of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services without significant increase in the level of resources available for HIV programmes in low and middle-income countries.
- Global coverage for prevention of mother to child transmission accounts for 34 percent as against the pledged target of 80 per cent.
- Children still accounted for one in six new HIV infections. The majority of children infected prematurely die before the age of two.
- Certain critical services, such as support for children orphaned by the epidemic, are not expanding as quickly as compared to others.
- Some countries that reported early success against the epidemic are having difficulty in sustaining previous achievements.
- The number of patients needing therapy continues to outstrip available financial, human and logistical resources.

Furthermore, the Sub-Saharan Africa continues to remain the most afflicted region with HIV/AIDS. In 2007 it accounted for over two thirds of all adults living with HIV, 90 percent of the world's HIV-infected children and three quarters of all AIDS death. This is undeniably a very gloomy and frightening picture for a continent which is still struggling to cater for the most pressing needs for its citizens - extreme poverty and hunger. The HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa is taking a high toll on human lives, including semi-skilled, skilled workers and professionals which are already in short supply; thereby seriously undermining genuine efforts for the development of the region. In order to overcome this humanitarian crisis, it is imperative that the international community takes immediate actions to follow through on the pledges made since 2001.

Mr. President,

Tuberculosis is one of the greatest threats to the health of people living with HIV. It is therefore necessary to prevent the development and spread of Tuberculosis and specifically drug resistant TB. Increased awareness is needed regarding the links between these two diseases and the need to scale up universal access to integrated TB and HIV prevention, diagnostic, treatment and care services.

Mr. President,

Allow me now to touch briefly on some of the important facts about HIV/AIDS in Mauritius. The overall HIV/AIDS infected rate in Mauritius is about 1.8 percent. However, although the rate of prevalence is low, Government strongly believes that political commitment is vital in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It has therefore, increased the amount allocated to HIV/AIDS by 50 per cent in this year's budget.

Government is implementing through the National AIDS Committee chaired by the Hon. Prime Minister a multi-sector HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan. It provides anti-retroviral treatment free of charge to all HIV infected persons, and has scaled up the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Service at the national level and also implements a prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Programme.

Government also recognizes the very important role that NGOs play in helping to reduce HIV/AIDS epidemic. In this context, it has provided funds to three of them to assist them in their activities.

Government has also set as a priority the minimizing of the transmission of HIV among Most at Risk Population (MARPs) namely intravenous drugs users, commercial sex workers and prisons inmates. In this respect, a three-pronged strategic approach is being implemented to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS and IDUs through Methadone Substitution Therapy, HIV/AIDS legislation and Needle Exchange programme.

Mr. President,

We do acknowledge that the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic is not easy to win. The lack of financial resources and Trade Related Aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights on drugs constitute major obstacles to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Those infected with HIV/AIDS not only require antiretroviral drugs to cater for their immediate needs but they require them at affordable and cheaper rate. In this context, it is absolutely essential that States must have the flexibility to relax patent protection, and thus lower drug prices in times of public health emergency. In addition to these, prevention should remain our highest priority. We need to invest heavily on key infrastructural facilities and services to provide for better health care services and education opportunities. A healthy and educated population constitutes the bedrock of any forward looking society. In this respect, we require the concerted efforts of all the stakeholders, government, non-governmental organisations, civil societies, pharmaceutical industries, medical researchers, the private sector and as well as the support of regional and international institutions and organizations.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me say that you very rightly pointed out in your opening address to this august body that "Addressing the global challenges of sustainable development, climate change, extreme poverty, hunger, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, are the moral and political imperatives of our time." Indeed they are! However, we could add to these imperatives the urgent Reform of the International Institutions. Without effective and responsive International Institutions and Organisations, the global challenges would continue to remain challenges and we run the risk of missing many more agreed targets.

Thank you.