



The Path that Ends AIDS Will Boost Progress Towards Sustainable Development Goals

UNAIDS event participants underscored the life-saving impact of the global HIV response and the need for continued support for PEPFAR.

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UNAIDS, the Governments of Botswana and the United States of America, together with the European Commission have joined global partners to urge world leaders to get on the path that ends AIDS. This, they say, will also accelerate progress to reach many other of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The call was made at a high-level event, Celebrating Global HIV Progress to End AIDS and Advance the Sustainable Development Goals, held during the 78th United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Participants underscored the life-saving impact of the global HIV response as well as the need for continued support, funding and commitment, including for the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

"PEPFAR is a symbol of the compassion of the American people," said Ambassador John N. Nkengasong, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Senior Bureau Official for Global Health Security and Diplomacy. "Through PEPFAR, we have changed the course of the AIDS pandemic and advanced SDG 3. The programme's value added has been well documented and advances progress toward other SDGs including 4 and 5. The ongoing work with our partner governments will help countries achieve UNAIDS' treatment targets and contribute to SDG 10."

The AIDS response has yielded dividends far beyond HIV, including for broader health, economic and development outcomes. SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) which includes SDG 3.3 (of which ending AIDS is a part), is within sight. The AIDS response has also generated momentum towards achieving several other SDGs, notably SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

The AIDS response has brought societies back from the brink. Successful HIV programmes have

supported the incomes of households affected by HIV by improving wealth and labour market outcomes boosting progress towards SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

“Ending AIDS is an indelible legacy that the leaders of today can etch into history by 2030,” said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “You wield the power to save millions of lives while advancing health, development and pandemic preparedness. Let us commit to ending AIDS as a reality, not just a dream, to forge a world that is healthier, more equal and more just.”

UNAIDS data show that new HIV infections are the lowest they have been since the 1980’s, having been reduced by almost 60% since the peak in 1995. AIDS-related deaths have been reduced by almost 70% since the peak in 2004, and around 30 million people now have access to HIV treatment, with 9 million still requiring access.

She announced that five countries are already on the path to end AIDS by 2030, having achieved the interim goals set for 2025 some three years early. A further 16 countries are close to reaching those goals.

“I stand before you as an example of the success of the global HIV response,” said Florence Anam, Co-Executive Director, GNP+. “However, structural and social barriers, stigma and discrimination, violence and criminalization continue to negatively impact access to prevention and treatment for many of us. I ask for your continued leadership and commitment to keep your promises to end AIDS and sustain all the gains made in the response so that millions of people can dream and have a bright future.

Despite the remarkable progress, HIV remains a global pandemic—claiming a life every minute in 2022 when 630 000 people died of AIDS-related illnesses and 1.3 million people became newly infected with HIV. Women and girls remain disproportionately affected, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Globally, 4000 young women and girls became infected with HIV every week in 2022, 3100 were in sub-Saharan Africa. Stigma, criminalization and discrimination are continuing to keep key populations, including gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, transgender people and sex workers, out of reach of HIV services.

Highlighting the benefits of decriminalizing same sex sexual relations, the Minister of Health of Botswana Dr Edwin Dikoloti said, “The decriminalization of same sex relations in Botswana has paved the way for an increase in seeking of HIV services. As such, the government can ensure that HIV treatment is universal.”

He went on to congratulate the work of UNAIDS saying, “We thank UNAIDS for its leadership in the AIDS response and in particular for its presence at country level to ensure coordination of partners and supporting the implementation of the global AIDS strategy which remains key in order to end AIDS. We call on the international community to maintain its development assistance including ensuring a fully funded UNAIDS.”

Affirming commitment from the European Union (EU), Dubravka ŠUICA, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography of the European Commission said, “Under our Global Health

Strategy, the EU is firmly committed to advancing global health in a human rights-based approach, supporting stronger health systems and universal health coverage. This includes addressing the major public health threat still posed by HIV, in a comprehensive way.”

Partners made a strong call for:

- Unflinching political commitment and leadership to end AIDS.
- Willingness to follow the science, the data, and the evidence.
- Human rights-based approaches, tackling the inequalities holding back progress, including harmful laws and policies, stigma and discrimination, and gender inequalities.
- Supporting, engaging and enabling community leadership and a community-led response.
- Sufficient and sustainable funding and a focus to protect the HIV gains into the future.

Closing the meeting Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) offered a powerful platform to mobilize the governments. He said, “I want to ask Ms Byanyima to reach out with me to all speakers of the parliaments of this world to ask them to ensure that we maintain and uphold the momentum that has been achieved in the global effort to fight AIDS. I want to confirm the IPU General Assembly as a platform for making sure parliaments place HIV high on the political agenda.”

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