

EU Statement for the High-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, 8-10 June 2016

Mr President, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

This High-Level Meeting on Ending HIV/AIDS marks a critical juncture in our efforts against the HIV epidemic and a unique opportunity to renew the political commitment to end it within the next 15 years.

First of all we would like to welcome the progress made to date in controlling the HIV epidemic and commend all who contributed to this success.

However, HIV continues to be a serious disease that still impacts the lives of millions of people globally. Despite major strides in global progress to control this disease, efforts need to be reinforced if we are to end AIDS by 2030. We strongly welcome the outcome of the United Nations High-Level Meeting today that calls for an accelerated response and renewed commitment. We would like to thank the co-facilitators of this process, Ambassador Mwaba Kasese-Bota of Zambia and Ambassador Jürg Lauber of Switzerland for their able leadership in the negotiations of this document.

We welcome and support the main tenets espoused in the Political Outcome and we welcome the calls for further tailored regional and national responses that can best address each country's specific epidemiological situation.

We fully endorse a human-rights based and gender-responsive approach to 'fast-track the end of AIDS and we particularly endorse a transformative and inclusive approach to 'leaving no one behind' in line with the 2030 Agenda, especially with regards to those individuals most affected and most at risk of being marginalized due to HIV/AIDS and who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status. In our effort to control the HIV epidemic, we need to continue to focus on those persons who are most at risk. This includes children, adolescents, young women, migrants and key populations, including, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, sex workers and transgender people, and prisoners. We would have appreciated even stronger language in this regard in the declaration. Human rights are for all without distinction and we must recognize that AIDS can only be eliminated by addressing the human rights violations that are sadly intrinsic to the epidemic.

To make AIDS history we must also put an end to all forms of violence and discrimination without distinction of any kind and protect and fulfill the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The European Union and its Member States remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights

(SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, we reaffirm our commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. We further stress the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.

The HIV epidemic continues to disproportionately affect sub-Saharan Africa, where two thirds of all new HIV infections still occur. Women and adolescent girls are particularly at risk. Eastern Europe is still one of the few regions where new HIV infections continue to increase. We not only observe an increase of new HIV-infections, the spread of co-infections as tuberculosis and Hepatitis B & C in Europe is also worrisome. The record number of new HIV-infections in WHO-Europe region last year, the spreading of multi-drug resistant TB and the increase in HIV/TB co-infections are major health threats.

In this regard, the Sustainable Development Goals, which we adopted last year mark a welcome shift from a focus on particular diseases to a more integrated and systemic approach to addressing the health needs of all individuals. Strong health systems and Universal Health Coverage will be essential for ending AIDS and many other diseases. But it is clear that the ambitious global goals on health will only be realised if domestic funding is increased, particularly in middle income countries.

Recognizing the tasks ahead, we have achievements we can point to in the EU and its Member States and we would be happy to share our experience across other regions. We have practically eliminated mother-to-child transmission. Heterosexual transmission and injecting drug use transmission are also declining in the EU overall. The only upward trend in many EU countries has been among men having sex with men, and EU Member States are taking steps to address this challenge. Across the EU we have relatively high treatment coverage and linkage to care. We have relatively well-established and well-supported civil society organisations which are also directly involved in providing community -based services. Moreover, we established cross-national research networks and infrastructures that address key research gaps, such as the development of a HIV vaccine, and provide evidence for national public health policies. We also have comprehensive surveillance networks, whose functioning is embedded in legislation.

Let me stress here that for a successful HIV response, we need to involve all relevant actors that can make a difference. Especially civil society plays a crucial role in this endeavour. The selection of NGOs to this meeting has neither been transparent nor inclusive and the European Union and its Member States, as expressed in earlier statements, are very concerned with this development. We remain strongly committed to ensuring an improved, more open and transparent process for the selection of NGOs participating in specific UN meetings/processes and deeply regret that this was not possible here.

Mr President,

Despite the progress we have made over the past decades we need to advance our efforts to ending AIDS. It is also clear that we will only succeed together. HIV affects all countries that

may have very different capacities to respond to the challenge. HIV also often affects parts of the population that are marginalised or otherwise vulnerable. HIV crosses borders and requires thus a strong international response.

We need collective action and solidarity with people most severely affected by HIV and AIDS those living in countries that cannot afford relevant services to everyone affected. The EU will continue to support action to address HIV at home, in the neighbourhood, and the world, using the financial, technical, and political instruments available to it.

I thank you.