

STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

AT

INFORMAL PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON

"END INEQUALITIES. END AIDS. END PANDEMICS"

**30 NOVEMBER 2021
15:00 HOURS**

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL

Please check against delivery.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a great pleasure for me to address this informal Plenary meeting of the General Assembly to mark **World AIDS Day**. I wish to thank you, **Mr. President**, for convening this important commemoration, and for inviting me.
2. 2021 is a year of important milestones in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Forty years after the first cases of HIV/AIDS were reported, progress has been made to reverse the epidemic's course by reducing the number of new HIV infections, developing affordable HIV treatments and decreasing the number of AIDS-related death.
3. At the height of the epidemic, the international community came together under the auspices of the United Nations to join hands to tackle an enormous global challenge to save lives.
4. 2021 also marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of an innovative joint programme of entities across the UN system to mobilize countries and communities around the world to take action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

5. UNAIDS was established by ECOSOC in 1994, and for four decades the programme has provided global leadership, promoted policy consensus, strengthened the capacity of national Governments to develop comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategies and of the UN system to monitor implementation. UNAIDS has been instrumental in mobilizing political commitment and social action to prevent and respond to HIV/AIDS.

6. The fight against HIV/AIDS serves as an example of successful political leadership and commitment, joint action in the face of any global crises, and importance of effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at the centre.

Mr. President,

7. HIV/AIDS disease and its impact remain a global concern. Almost **40 million people** are living with HIV today. Every year, there are **1.7 million** new infections.¹
8. While some countries have made remarkable progress in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, others are off-track. In some places, previous gains are being reversed. This situation has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. HIV/AIDS is also a disease of inequality. Vulnerable and stigmatized populations are among the most affected, discriminated and least supported. Gender inequality leaves women and girls particularly vulnerable to HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa, **six out of seven** new infections among adolescents are among girls².
10. The international community must accelerate its efforts to reach the global goal to end AIDS. Urgent action is required to end stigma and discrimination and to address gender-based inequalities. More investment is particularly needed in preparedness, prevention, testing, and treatment.
11. COVID-19 has exposed the fragility of our national health systems and laid bare the world's lack of preparedness to mount an effective response to a global health crisis.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

¹ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/global-commitments-local-action_en.pdf

² https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/global-commitments-local-action_en.pdf

12. As we work towards a swift recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including through promoting equitable access to affordable vaccines for everyone, there are some important lessons learned from the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
13. These include the importance of a coordinated global response, based on solidarity and international cooperation, and of a multisectoral approach that brings together all relevant stakeholders, the critical role of local and community-based action, and the tracking of progress against concrete targets and commitments.
14. Earlier this year, the General Assembly adopted³ a far reaching and visionary Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS that outlines an ambitious pathway for ending inequalities and getting on track to end AIDS by 2030.
15. In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies' support to the full implementation of the Political Declaration and its readiness to play its role in contributing to a world without AIDS.

I thank you for your kind attention.

³ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2021_political-declaration-on-hiv-and-aids_en.pdf