



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.AustraliaUN.org

General Assembly
Tuesday 12 June 2018

Statement on Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the political declarations on HIV/AIDS

Statement by Ms Natalie Cohen, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Mr President,

Each year, we gather at this event to reflect on our 37-year campaign to end HIV and AIDS. This year, Australia welcomes the gains we have made across many of the 2020 Fast Track Targets.

About 21 million people living with HIV were on antiretroviral therapy. This scale-up has directly led to a decline in AIDS-related deaths by 48% since the peak in 2005. In my region, Asia and the Pacific, new HIV infections declined by 13% between 2010 and 2016.

The 2016 Declaration placed human rights at the core of the global HIV response; it recognised the need to empower women and girls through comprehensive sexuality education, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and elimination of gender-based violence.

It also recognised the need for continued emphasis on those who are at greater risk of contracting HIV, based on epidemiological evidence.

And, it recognised that ending stigma and discrimination, and resisting criminalisation was the only way to bring people out of the shadows to fulfil their right to access prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

In 2016, Australia was satisfied that the Declaration represented a significant step forward from its 2011 predecessor. However, at that time we stated plainly that the Declaration outlined *the minimum* needed to end the HIV epidemic.

Mr President,

We are at risk of losing these hard won gains. The current rate of decline is too slow to reach the global targets. We are particularly alarmed that it is becoming more and more difficult to reach consensus on the issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights and ending stigma and discrimination of marginalised populations; issues at the very heart of an effective HIV-response.

We cannot meet the targets without compassion, understanding, respect and partnership with key populations; not just because it's the decent thing to do, but because it's proven to be the most effective approach to tackling the epidemic.

And we need to address the structural drivers of the epidemic through a comprehensive approach, anchored in primary prevention, universal health coverage and equal access to health services.

This integrated approach to health is vital, and has driven a decline in tuberculosis-related deaths among people living with HIV. This year, the Member-States of the UN will consider a range of health-related resolutions; including on tuberculosis, non-communicable diseases and universal health coverage. They are inextricably linked, and if we do not view them through the prism of building strong health systems with access for all, we will fail to meet the expectations of the communities we serve.

UNAIDS has a vital role to play in convening and propelling the global AIDS response, and we acknowledge their important work. We thank the UNAIDS Secretariat for its efforts to address UNAIDS' funding shortfall and sharpen its resource mobilisation through the UNAIDS Joint Programme Action Plan, and we look forward to receiving information about how UNAIDS is engaging and aligning its work with the broader UN Development System Reform process.

Thank you Mr President.