
UNAIDS STATEMENT

World Health Organization Executive Board 152nd session

Agenda Item 2: Report of the WHO DG

Chair, Distinguished Executive Board members,

I would like to commend you and the WHO, under the leadership of the Director General, for the progress you have helped make against outbreaks of disease and pandemics while continuing your critical work to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable.

UNAIDS values the efforts of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) to develop an accord on Pandemics in collaboration with key stakeholders including communities, civil society and other non-state actors.

UNAIDS participates in this process as an observer, bringing invaluable lessons and vast experience from decades of work in the global response to HIV/AIDS. Many insights gleaned from fighting AIDS have been leveraged to address COVID-19. The huge investments made by the international community and countries responses to AIDS in strengthening health and community systems, laboratory and surveillance systems and in frontline workers are critical for informing how the world prepares for, and responds to, future pandemics.

I want to highlight 3 other critical lessons:

One: Pandemics are prolonged when health technologies are unequally shared. It is critical that health technologies be considered global public goods to allow equitable access by all people who require them. At the beginning of the AIDS response, millions died unnecessarily because existing life-saving antiretroviral medicines were unaffordable and inaccessible to them.

Two: Pandemics deepen inequalities -- and they are exacerbated by them. To end AIDS, COVID-19 or any pandemic, we must end inequalities. Doing so requires a whole-of-society approach—one with communities at the centre of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Three: Effectively tackling pandemics requires the full protection and promotion of the human rights of all people. We must move beyond vague references to “vulnerable communities” and specifically name those who are

disproportionately affected by pandemics. By doing so, we can work directly with them to offer them equal access to health.

While we have made remarkable progress against HIV/AIDS thanks to these learnings, we are currently not on track to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Progress in preventing new HIV infections is faltering.

In 2021, 1.5 million people were newly infected with HIV. Every two minutes an adolescent girl or young woman contracts HIV. Progress on treatment is also off track. It is an outrage that only half of all children living with HIV have access to medicines that can save their lives. 650,000 people died of AIDS-related causes last year— one precious life nearly every minute. On the current trajectory, millions more will die this decade.

People are contracting HIV and dying from AIDS today not because medical solutions don't exist. They do. People are contracting HIV and dying from AIDS because inequalities and corporate greed prevent them from accessing life-saving tools.

What is true for AIDS is true for every pandemic: Only when everyone, everywhere, has access to the best that science has to offer and when each person's human rights are fully protected will we be able to finally end any pandemic.

We continue working as a Joint Programme to implement these lessons. Doing so will help us end AIDS while ensuring the world is better prepared to address tomorrow's threats.

I wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you