Winnie Byanyima UNAIDS ExecutiveDirector

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Greetings to you, distinguished members of the World Health Assembly, partners and WHO. Thank you to my brother, Dr Tedros, for your leadership and selfless dedication.

2021 is a landmark year in the AIDS response. We are commemorating 40 years since first reported cases of AIDS and have only this decade left to meet our shared pledge to end it. The Covid 19 crisis threatens our progress. At the same time, the lessons learnt and institutional infrastructure built up to tackle HIV and AIDS offer an invaluable resource in overcoming the Covid crisis and for future pandemic preparedness.

In two weeks time, the UN General Assembly will adopt a new Political Declaration on AIDS. I am calling on member states to engage at the highest level and am counting on your support for a bold Political Declaration reflecting renewed global commitment, with ambitious targets that will get the world back on track to ending AIDS by 2030. The greatest progress we have made in tackling HIV and AIDS has been won through the heroic struggles of communities, bold leadership by governments, and global solidarity.

We are in the second year of a pandemic that has affected us in more ways than we could have ever imagined. A year ago, the barrier to battling COVID19 was science. Today it is inequality.

We in the HIV movement urge everyone: let us not repeat the painful history of the first years of the HIV pandemic. As the WHO, the UN Secretary-General, developing country governments and civil society organisatons have all said it. For everyone to access the covid19 vaccine, we need the TRIPS waiver, the transfer of technology and know-how, and the financing. We need all three now.

I take this opportunity to thank our PCB members for adopting by consensus the Global AIDS 2021-2026 Strategy, End Inequalities, End AIDS. I am confident that the WHO sectoral strategy on HIV you will discuss at this Assembly will be fully aligned with the Global AIDS Strategy.

Distinguished delegates, our power as leaders right now comes from our unity and from our courage. The most unrealistic thing would be to imagine we could overcome this crisis *without* being bold, or that we could do it *alone*. I am confident that we will get through this, together.

I wish you a successful Assembly.