



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Check against delivery

General Assembly
65th Session

UN General Assembly High-level meeting on HIV/AIDS

Swiss Statement

presented by
Mr. Martin Dahinden
Secretary of State

Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations

New York, 09 June 2011

Combating HIV/AIDS will remain a priority for Switzerland at both the national and international level. My country is delighted that it has been possible to find a consensus on a new joint declaration on HIV/AIDS and thanks the Secretary-General for his excellent report. We appreciate the data thus gathered and we support the recommendations made. While some of the results are encouraging, it must be noted that although the epidemic has been stabilized worldwide, the rate of infection in some countries continues to climb. There are still major challenges ahead, notably in areas closely linked to prevention and the protection of human rights. Homophobia, punitive laws concerning those who live with HIV/AIDS and sexist violence increasingly undermine efforts to extend HIV related services to key segments of the population.

Efforts to combat discrimination and the stigmatization are crucial. This is valid in Switzerland where we are taking concrete measures to better fight against such attitudes, but also at the international level where often key segments of the population – such as men who have sex with men, sex workers, persons who inject drugs, transsexuals and adolescents – have no access to information, prevention, treatment, care or support related to HIV.

In this context I would like to underline the positive experience which Switzerland has had with respect to those who inject drugs, notably in an effort to reduce the risks involved. The decrease in infections in this group shows how important it is to include those directly concerned by HIV/AIDS in the search for solutions. We encourage other countries to support efforts in reducing risks and including this key group in order to become common practices.

Switzerland is committed in its programmes, as well as in different forums and at various other levels, to making the promotion and protection of human rights, including those linked to sexual and reproductive health, and to equality of the sexes, a centerpiece of all efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. Those directly concerned must have the power to decide for themselves on the future of their sexual and reproductive health. For example economic, social, cultural and legal factors which deny women and girls their fundamental rights must be eliminated. In this context we would like to underline the crucial role of men and boys with respect to sexual and reproductive health and efforts to combat HIV. Violence against women and girls and homophobia must be outlawed by legislation which is rigorously applied. Also worth noting is the importance of respecting and protecting the rights of millions of children and adolescents affected and infected by HIV. Young people often have no access to sex education or to sexual and reproductive health services suited to their specific needs.

Switzerland has multiplied its efforts in the areas of prevention and the link between HIV and sexual and reproductive health. It is now known that a genuine strategy for prevention should be based on sound science that promotes shared responsibility for the protection of the sexual health of those affected.

Access to medicines remains a major challenge on an international scale. It is crucial to create strategic partnerships between different sectors and actors in an effort to ensure non-discriminatory access for all to basic health services and to medicines.

Despite the many possible conflicts of interest, the private sector is increasingly becoming aware of its global social responsibility in the health sector, and this holds out new possibilities for cooperation. The Medicines Patent Pool for example seems to us to be an interesting initiative in this regard.

At the national level, HIV is still a major concern for Swiss public health officials, since in 2010 those affected numbered at least 20,000 and each year between 600 and 800 are diagnosed as seropositive mainly among the key population at higher risk. However the number of persons newly diagnosed as having HIV is greater than the number of deaths due to the condition, thanks to successful treatment and to risk reduction practice. This means that there is a steady increase in the number of seropositive individuals in need of medical care, with complications due to the aging process and long term treatment. Other sexually transmissible infections are also a public health problem. These are constantly on the increase and bring with them the danger of co-infection with HIV.

Our national programme prolongs 25 years of “past” efforts to prevent HIV and similar infections in Switzerland. This approach allows to prevent other sexually transmissible infections can be made on the same basis using existing HIV prevention structures.

Since it was first discovered, HIV has claimed more than 25 million victims. The international response has been equally impressive, but these efforts must continue. The leading international organizations in the campaign against HIV/AIDS -- the World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS and the Global Fund – recently developed new instruments and strategies to combat HIV such as the UNAIDS Strategy 2011-2015, the WHO HIV/AIDS Strategy for 2011-2015, the new Global Fund Strategy and the strategy of the World Food Programme. Switzerland would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to UNAIDS’ role as a catalyst and to the efforts of its 10 co-sponsors as well as many other actors in responding effectively to this pandemic. We would also like to take this opportunity to point out once again the need to share the various roles and responsibilities, particularly in so far as UNAIDS’ support to the processes involved in the major Global Fund financing efforts is concerned, and the need to coordinate all such efforts so as to ensure that sustainable solutions will be found for the challenges that remain.

In conclusion, Switzerland intends to continue to give its full support to the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment of 2001, to the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS of 2006, and to the new one we are going to adopt at the end of this high level meeting. Thank you.