

Impact of HIV/AIDS on International Peace and Security

7 June 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Permanent Representative of the Indian Mission, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri

Mr. President [the President of Gabon],

We are honored by your presiding over the Council at this debate. Please allow me to join others in welcoming you to New York.

We would also like express our appreciation for the efforts of your delegation in organizing this debate and during the negotiation of the resolution.

My thanks are also due to the Secretary General, H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon and UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibe, for their statements.

Mr. President,

HIV/AIDS is a scourge of our times. It has caused untold misery affecting the lives of millions of people across the globe though some parts of the world have been more adversely affected by HIV and AIDS than others.

I am glad that thirty years after the HIV became known, the efforts of the international community and national governments are beginning to show positive movements on our being able to tackle HIV and AIDS.

The need of the hour is to continue these efforts with acceleration and ensure that the international community is intense in its support of national efforts.

The lack of firm commitment for financial resources for developing countries to bolster their prevention and treatment systems, including through capacity building, and the high cost of medicines exacerbated through trade and IPR barriers for generics require serious and immediate attention of the international community.

Mr. President,

On our part in India we have strived with all determination to control and tackle the spread of HIV and AIDS with a massive National AIDS Control Programme at the centre of our efforts.

The targeted intervention programme is buttressed with a more broad based awareness and educational programmes.

In addition, involvement of community and civil society at all stages of policy has also provided the necessary impetus in our success.

The latest statistics show an overall reduction in adult HIV prevalence and new infection in India. Adult HIV prevalence has declined from 0.41% in 2000 to 0.31% in 2009.

Moreover, the estimated number of new annual HIV infections has reduced by more than 50% over the past decade, from 270,000 in 2000 to 120,000 in 2009.

However, our disease burden in absolute terms is high at 2.27 million and it is estimated that nearly 172,000 people died of AIDS related illnesses in India.

India's contribution to the global fight against HIV and AIDS has gone well beyond our national boundaries.

Dubbed as the "pharmacy of the world", our pharmaceutical companies have been in the forefront to ensure supply and access of safe, effective, affordable and

good quality generic anti-retroviral treatment for HIV and AIDS to other developing countries in dire need of such medicines.

Mr. President,

The immense challenge posed by the spread of HIV/AIDS has had across the board implications for societies on the economic, social, legal and moral fronts. It has weakened the abilities of affected people and societies from pursuing progress on well-being.

With the highest prevalence rates and disease burdens being in societies that have nothing to do with conflict, HIV and AIDS has not created conditions of instability and insecurity, apprehensions in UNSCR 1308 notwithstanding.

We must, however, recognize the possibilities of the epidemic being fuelled in situations of armed conflict and post conflict.

In armed conflicts and post-conflict situations there is also lack of information or credible data on the magnitude of HIV and AIDS.

It is critical that UN response in the field in such situations is cognizant of this fact. UN Mission leaders, be it civilian or military, should be sensitive to this important global public health challenge.

We welcome the incorporation of HIV awareness activities in mandated activities of peacekeepers and outreach projects for vulnerable communities. Uniformed peacekeeping personnel can also be effective agents of change in such missions.

We also strongly support HIV and AIDS preventive measures to be part of the preparation and discipline of peacekeeping forces. Well informed UN mission personnel in the field can make a significant difference to the success of such additional tasks assigned to them.

In this context I would like to refer to the abhorrent and intolerable practice of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, which could lead to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

We strongly support the orientation of the operational and peacekeeping activities of the United Nations towards recognizing the plight of women and children in conflict areas and proactively work towards preventing violence against them.

Mr President,

The General Assembly is convening at High Level on HIV and AIDS from tomorrow with the presence of a large number of Heads of States and Governments and Ministers.

We should not allow the vision of a world without HIV and AIDS to remain a dream. We are hopeful that the new Declaration, which will be adopted by the General Assembly on Friday, will demonstrate the strong commitment of the international community to face this global challenge in a resolute and determined manner.

Thank you, Mr President.