

Impact of HIV/AIDS on International Peace and Security

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Statement by the Representative of Portugal, H. E. Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral

Mr. President,

I thank and congratulate you, Mr. President, for convening this debate.

I also thank the Secretary-General and the UNAIDS Executive Director for their participation in our discussions and for their comprehensive briefings.

“The impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic on international peace and security” is an issue to which Portugal attaches the utmost importance.

As others, we believe that it is the responsibility of this Council to increasingly address the new challenges that undermine World peace, security and stability, be it the traffic in drugs, people or guns; certain consequences of climate change – from food security to loss of territory and forced migration; development issues as discussed under the presidency of Brasil, or the subject that we are addressing today: enduring large scale epidemics as a challenge to international security.

In this context I wish also to mention Tuberculosis, so often associated with AIDS, and which kills hundreds of thousands a year. I take this occasion to extend a warm welcome to the Secretary General’s Special Envoy to stop TB, President Jorge Sampaio, who has joined us today.

Allow me to commend UNAIDS and DPKO for their progress report – “On the Front Line” – not only for the clear picture it gives us of the progress made in the implementation of resolution 1308 between 2005 and 2010, but also for the recommendations included, which provide us with a roadmap towards a more comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS.

Mr. President,

Over the past three decades HIV and AIDS have taken more than 25 million lives and have caused the infection of 60 million people around the World. Not only has it been a major threat to life and human health, but has also seriously impacted the economic and social fabric of many countries in different regions, putting at risk their stability.

Nevertheless, the international community did not immediately recognize that the fast growing consequences of HIV/AIDS represented a new and real challenge to international security.

Thus, Security Council Resolution 1308 adopted in July 2000 was indeed a milestone in the international response to the epidemic, as it acknowledged its uniquely devastating impact on all sectors and levels of society, and as a threat, if unchecked, to stability and security of many countries.

Furthermore, it centered on the potential damaging impact of HIV/AIDS on the health of peacekeeping personnel, including support personnel, and called for concrete measures and international cooperation with the objective of better preparing them for their participation in peacekeeping operations.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, we are still confronted today with an increasing number of cases of sexual violence in the context of conflict, at a time when conflicts are themselves growing in number and intensity. When combined with HIV/AIDS, these situations become particularly explosive ones.

Indeed, when these two elements are brought together, they have the potential to generate devastating consequences for whole regions and states, striking the most vital elements of society, namely their youth, including in particular women and children, specially when rape is used as a weapon of war and intimidation.

As we know, there is a high prevalence of HIV among women who have been victims of sexual violence and we cannot disregard this fact and its lasting consequences when we address peacebuilding strategies in post-conflict societies.

Furthermore conflict normally fosters the displacement of civilians, especially women and girls, increasing their exposure to HIV. In this context we believe there is a need to implement effective integrated programs that address both sexual violence, HIV prevention and AIDS treatment in conflict and post conflict settings.

Portugal commends the collaboration between DPKO and UNAIDS in addressing HIV and AIDS awareness among peacekeeping personnel, and believes that the United Nations should take the lead in setting the highest possible medical standards in protecting both UN personnel and the local population from this epidemic.

In this regard, we welcome the measures undertaken by DPKO aimed at improving the awareness programmes for peacekeepers and peacebuilders, and, in particular, having HIV and AIDS advisers and focal points in United Nations missions. We believe that DPKO and UNAIDS efforts will have to be further complemented by ensuring that the medical guidelines for operations are fully implemented.

It is important that countries increasingly harmonize pre-deployment and in-country awareness programmes, as it is as important to raise awareness of peacekeeping and peacebuilding personnel of the medical risks in the mission area, as well as their capacity to deal with them. We acknowledge the efforts already undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Support and the Department of Field Support in this area, including through In-mission induction training and education.

Likewise, the adoption of the comprehensive strategy to eliminate sexual abuse in United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations is a major step in the right direction. The zero tolerance policy in these missions stands also as a key factor in this area, while a comprehensive policy to prevent sexual abuse should extend to all fields of the United Nations' work. Training in the prevention of sexual violence should be strengthened and integrated into policy and law enforcement practices.

I do not doubt, Mr. President, that an effective response to HIV and AIDS through the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations, will greatly contribute to increase the capacity of UN missions in their tasks of protecting civilians and furthering human rights.

Mr. le Président,

Des responsables mondiaux se réuniront ici à New York, pendant les trois prochains jours, pour évaluer les progrès enregistrés depuis la réunion, à tout titre historique, de l'Assemblée Générale spéciale de 2001, dédiée au HIV et au SIDA.

Malgré toute l'évolution positive à laquelle nous assistons, que ce soit en termes de la diminution globale de l'incidence du HIV, ou l'expansion de l'accès aux traitements, il faut reconnaître que ces progrès sont encore bien fragiles.

Il appartient à la Communauté Internationale, d'ores et déjà, de réfléchir sur cette expérience, sur les leçons que nous pouvons et devons en retirer, tout en renforçant nos efforts afin de garantir que, en 2015, l'accès universel à la prévention et au traitement soient garantis.

Il nous faudra, pour cela, un engagement politique fort, le seul qui nous permettra de maintenir la réponse internationale au HIV comme une priorité, et le seul qui nous permettra aussi de joindre la vision du Secrétaire-Général sur un Monde libéré de nouvelles infections par le HIV, de toute discrimination, et de toute mort causée par le SIDA.

Je vous remercie.