

Impact of HIV/AIDS on International Peace and Security

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Statement by UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé

Thank you for inviting me to address you today. I want to thank the President of the Republic of Gabon, and to congratulate him for his leadership in dramatically scaling up the AIDS response in his own country. I also want to express my gratitude to him, and to Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, for bringing the attention of the Security Council back to the critical relationship between AIDS and international peace and security.

Crossroads.

The global AIDS response is at a crossroads. Ten years ago, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1308, and the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. We have made significant progress since then, providing HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services to peacekeepers and other uniformed services personnel.

But I am deeply concerned by the ways AIDS still intersects with conflict. HIV impacts peacekeepers and others in uniform—and also the populations with whom they interact. That is why this new resolution is so important to us.

Resolution 1308 was a watershed moment for the AIDS response. We are indebted to the late Richard Holbrooke for backing this resolution so passionately. What he said then still holds true today: “It should not be the end of the process, but only a cornerstone for the future.”

Member States were right to recognize AIDS as a potential threat to peace and security. I want to thank the Secretary-General for repeatedly calling attention to AIDS in his reports to the UN Security Council.

Progress against HIV infection in people in uniform has been positive, but it remains uneven and insufficient. The risk HIV poses to peace and security is far more nuanced than we thought in 2000, while the nature of conflict—and the epidemic itself—have evolved.

We are convinced that fresh political commitments around this new resolution will enable the UN to effectively contribute to the efforts of Member States to address the impact of AIDS on peace and security. In so doing, Member States will also be encouraged strengthen their response AIDS in National Strategic Plans, and put into place appropriate strategies, policies, capacities and resources.

Sexual violence and conflict

Tragically, we have seen the increased frequency of sexual violence used as a tactic of war. This new resolution is right in calling for HIV prevention among uniformed services to be aligned with efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The disproportionate burden of HIV on women is a serious obstacle to the full participation of women in efforts to prevent and resolve conflict and build peace. It is my hope that this new resolution will motivate all parties concerned to better empower women and strengthen capacities of national health systems and civil society networks to provide sustainable assistance to women infected or affected by HIV in armed and post-conflict settings.

AIDS response has changed

The AIDS response has also changed dramatically since 1308. Today, we have the capacity to provide wide-scale treatment and to target prevention to populations at higher risk of HIV infection. We see that post-conflict and transition periods bring an increased risk of HIV and for sexual violence to countries, and we understand how to address both of these challenges. We have made progress; now we need to scale up. DPKO, in close collaboration with UNAIDS, wants to work with Member States on DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) and SSR (Security Sector Reform). This can enable countries to benefit from a force of blue berets that is strong, healthy and fit for even the most difficult peacekeeping missions

Change agents

Since 1308, we have come to understand that peacekeepers and the millions of people in uniform can play a leading role in HIV prevention as they secure peace around the world. Their extensive contacts with populations in conflict, post-conflict and other settings position them as agents of positive change—particularly with respect to preventing violence against women and girls in conflict.

Partnership

I hope this new resolution reinvigorates global and regional partnerships working to prevent conflict, ensure security and build peace. These partnerships can ensure that the UN contributes to building the government and civil society capacities of Member States. There are symbiotic actions in the General Assembly to ensure this happens. We are acutely aware that global, national and personal insecurity will undermine our efforts to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support. This new resolution is key to realizing the future we all desire: zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.