



STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY STEVE D. MATENJE, SC, AMBASSADOR AND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI TO THE UNITED
NATIONS

ON

AGENDA ITEM 41: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT
ON HIV/AIDS AND THE POLITICAL DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Let me begin by aligning my delegation with the statements delivered by the delegation of Swaziland on behalf of the African Group and the Minister of Health of South Africa on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community, (SADC). I would like to add Malawi's voice to this important debate.

We thank the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/63/812 that is before the Assembly. We note the developments in the AIDS response and the challenges that we continue to face in our quest to meet the target of attaining universal access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

Malawi supports the forward looking recommendations contained in the Secretary General's report and is committed to translating the recommendations into further action aimed at the full implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

At a national level, the Malawi Government and its leadership remain fully and strongly committed to the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic. As such, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, a home grown overarching national development policy for achieving sustainable growth and development, places the fight against HIV and AIDS as one of the six priority areas that need urgent and continuous attention in the implementation of our national development agenda and the attainment of the internationally-agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals.

The implementation process of the national development agenda focuses on several specific activities including the prevention of the spread of HIV infection, providing treatment and nutrition support for people living with HIV and AIDS and mitigating the health, socio-economic and psychosocial impact of HIV and AIDS on the general population and high risk groups, particularly women and children.

Most importantly, the Government has placed the prevention and management of nutritional disorders as well as programs to control malaria and tuberculosis and eradicate poverty, as part of the comprehensive response to the HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care.

In addition special focus has been put on the empowerment of women and the girl child in recognition of the feminization of the pandemic.

Mr. President,

Over time some progress in the fight against the pandemic has been registered in Malawi. For instance, HIV and AIDS knowledge is almost universal; behavior change particularly in condom use has increased from 47% to 57% among sexually active males and from 30% to 37.5% among sexually active females; HIV prevalence among persons aged 15 to 49 declined from 14.4% in 2005 to 12% in 2007.

Further to this:

- 661,400 people were tested in 2007 compared to 283,461 people in 2004;
- 280,446 pregnant women were tested in 2007 compared to 52,904 in 2005;
- 146,856 people were on antiretroviral therapy (ART) in 2007 compared to 3,000 in 2003 with survival rate of 78%
- 39% of HIV positive tuberculosis patients were placed on ART in 2007 compared to 29% in 2005;
- 53% of the 1 million orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs) received different types of assistance including direct cash transfers as part of the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children launched by government in 2004.

The National AIDS Commission is currently collecting data for 2008.

Mr. President,

While the National HIV and AIDS policy has enhanced the fight against HIV and AIDS, challenges still remain. These include stigma and discrimination in all

settings, inadequate human resource capacity, brain drain of skilled health care professionals, inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome donor funds disbursement procedures and procurement conditionalities, and high cost of anti-retroviral medicines.

In this regard, we look forward to continued cooperation with our development partners and the international community in the collective fight against HIV and AIDS. Malawi will continue to build and strengthen systems that are aimed at improving the effectiveness of HIV and AIDS service delivery at all levels.

I thank you.