



Message from Jacques CHIRAC, President of the French republic, on the occasion of the United Nations general assembly high-level meeting on aids, delivered by Mr Philippe Douste Blazy French minister of foreign affairs

New York United States Friday 2nd June 2006

Secretary-General,
President of the General Assembly,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international community has given two commitments in the fight against AIDS: by 2010 (in other words, tomorrow), to ensure universal access to treatment, and by 2015, to have reversed the progress of the pandemic. We must fulfil these commitments because the current situation, where the virus continues to spread, destroying over 3 million lives per year, where the vast majority of sufferers are in the southern hemisphere while medicines remain in the northern hemisphere, is morally reprehensible, politically dangerous and economically absurd. It is all the more unacceptable given that we have all the means necessary to succeed.

Both in the southern and northern hemispheres, governments and civic societies have been mobilised; available financial resources have increased tenfold since 2001; the Global Fund, to which France is the second-largest contributor, has become a major force in the fight against the pandemic; and intellectual property rules at the WTO have been made more flexible to enable access to generic medicines.

Yet, of the 40 million people who are HIV-positive, only one and a half million have the benefit of anti-retroviral treatments in countries of the southern hemisphere. We are way behind, since, to satisfy immediate needs, six million should already be receiving treatment. To achieve this, a renewed political effort is required, with a new economic model based on four priorities.

The first priority is to increase resources. We have reached the halfway stage, but are now on a plateau.

We must renew our efforts. This means increasing official development assistance. In 2007, France will therefore increase its contribution to the Global Fund to 300 million euros.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

It also means that new financing mechanisms must be set up, in order to raise the necessary resources when required. This is the purpose of the air-ticket solidarity contribution, which has now been adopted by 14 countries in principle, and which will be implemented in France from July 1st.

Alongside Brazil, Chile and Norway, we propose that the sums raised in this way be allocated to an International Drug Purchasing Facility, to complement the existing institutions, and in particular the Global Fund.

A new economic model will thus be established. By giving manufacturers the visibility necessary to invest in research and new pharmaceutical production capacity, and consolidating reductions in prices, it will ensure that poorer countries have the capacity to access effective treatment for everyone.

The second priority is to strengthen coordination between bilateral and multilateral donors to support national strategies to combat AIDS. The international working group created last year following the conference organised in London on the initiative of UNAIDS, France, the United Kingdom and the United States has made specific recommendations to avoid wastage and duplicated work. These recommendations must be implemented.

The third priority is to help countries in the southern hemisphere to strengthen their health services. This is clearly an essential accompaniment to national prevention and treatment efforts. For this reason I will put forward a proposal at the G8 Summit in St Petersburg for an international initiative to look at health insurance mechanisms that are suitable for the poorest countries.

Finally, the fourth priority is research. Only a preventive vaccine can really curb the progress of the epidemic. To find one, we must improve international public and private cooperation. Through its National AIDS Research Agency, France is fully involved in international and European partnerships and in therapeutic and vaccine research programmes in Africa.

*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than two decades now, we have seen the development of the AIDS virus. In its wake we have seen millions of broken lives, orphans plunged into distress and violence, and social, economic and political disorder that hinder the development of entire continents, and particularly of Africa, which has paid the highest price.

This scourge has reminded us of the threat to humanity posed by infectious diseases. In order to combat viruses that do not respect borders, that thrive on the failings of health services, and in the fertile soil of poverty and exclusion, we must deploy the power of international cooperation and solidarity. What is at stake is nothing less than the future safety of humankind, human dignity and justice. Our success so far has given us great hope. Let us now turn that hope into reality.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Thank you. |

